THE CHEVALIER OF PENSIERI VANI

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THE CHEVALIER OF PENSIERI-VANI

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THE CHEVALIER OF PENSIERI-VANI

BY
HENRY B. FULLER

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1892

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TO

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

Occasion has been taken, in connection with the manufacture of a new set of plates for The Chevalier, to make a complete revision of the text. Readers of the book in its original shape will note, too, the incorporation of a new chapter. For the scene of this chapter I have selected a locality likely to please that early and indulgent reader who has accepted the dedication of the book in its latest form and to whose kindness its first success was largely due.

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THE CHEVALIER OF PENSIERI-VANI

I

VITERBO: AN ELUSIVE ETRUSCAN

IT was the Chevalier of Pensieri-Vani who halted his traveling-carriage upon the brow of the Ciminian Forest to look down over the wide-spread Campagna di Roma. Or, to be more accurate, the carriage was not his, but was merely hired by him from a certain *vetturino* of Viterbo. Or, again, to be accurate beyond any possibility of cavil or question, it was not a carriage at all, but simply a sort of little gig or chaise, *a due posti*, and was neither new, nor neat, nor over-comfortable. But the scrubby little mare went well enough along, and her owner, considerately entreated, had turned out to be sufficiently civil and trustworthy. The effects of the traveler were, in the main, stored away under the seat, and included, so far as might be observed, a sketch-book, a bottle of Orvieto, a vol-

ume or two on Etruria, and a brown-paper parcel which may have contained, if it be not impertinent to hazard the guess, a trifle in the way of bread and cheese. The Chevalier, I now scarce need confess, was a "poor gentleman"—one with much, perhaps, behind him, but very little by him, and not much more before him. But he loved the post-roads of Tuscany, and the soft vowels of the *bocca Romana*, and every spreading pine-tree and every antique stone of the fair Italian land. He had little money and little prestige; but he was young, and he was happy, too, in an abundance of leisure and a disposition to follow the byways with content. And he was on his way to Rome.

Dost know the tombs of Castel d'Asso? The towers of San Gimignano? The outlooks from Montepulciano? The palaces of Pienza? The cloisters of Oliveto Maggiore? Hast ever penetrated the obscure renown of the Fanum Voltumnæ,—or followed the fading frescos of the Grotta del Trinclinio,—or studied the lengthening shadows of the Val di Chiana,—or boated it across to the lonely isles of the Lago Trasimeno? No? Nor have I. How Pensieri-Vani would pity us both! For he has; such things are his life. Is he the one to weary of rugged roads, and scanty fare, and solitary sojournings while Toscanella, and Orvieto, and Bracciano, and Cività Castellana beckon him on? Ah, you are yet to know the man!

If you had asked the Cavaliere—his title was Italian, and should take the Italian form—why he cared so much for old Etruria, I am not sure that

his answer would have been as clean-cut as your question. Indeed, he might not have tried to frame an answer at all; he might have given up at once any idea of making himself, his tastes, his preferences, his actions, perfectly intelligible before the prying criticism of the utilitarian Philistine. If it was his *pleasure* to take up his maps and his sketching-block, and to wander at will among the immemorial monuments, obscure and fragmentary and almost inaccessible, of a day and generation long since passed away, why should we ask him for an explanation? If we explain our pleasures, they are pleasures no longer. One may be called upon to justify his pleasures, perhaps, but not to diagram them. And since the Cavaliere's pleasures were so simple, so harmless, and so inexpensive, we must let them pass unchallenged. If he loved rock-hewn antiquities, along with beaming sky, and blooming flowers, and humble *osterie*, and friendly peasant-folk, and every day looked forward with tremulous expectation to a great discovery which should lay before the *cognoscenti* a "sepolcro scoperto dal Cavaliere di Pensieri-Vani," we need not try fully to understand him, but may best cut it short and take him as he is.

As I have said, the Cavaliere was on his way to Rome. And why he was on his way to Rome, I can perhaps contrive partly to tell without any great violation of secrecy. But the Cavaliere would hardly care to accept the gift of fame at the hands of the vulgar, and if I do tell, I need not look to him for thanks. Briefly, he was going to Rome to meet a

certain small circle of kindred spirits who awaited his arrival with the most ardent impatience, and who, inflamed by the possession of certain secret intelligence, scarcely could be restrained from setting out to meet him. Pensieri-Vani was, indeed, almost as eager as his friends, but he was sufficiently master of himself to advance in the modest and leisurely fashion that I have implied. He was proud and happy and exultant, and his little hour of pleasure he was quite willing to prolong. And he knew that as he went southward his happiness would grow with every step; and the tumultuous rapture with which he should mark off the last mile of the Via Flaminia he regarded as almost the crown of his felicity; as he passed under the Porta del Popolo he should be on the point of placing the crown, in a sense, upon his head.

He carried the crown with him,—a literal, actual crown, a crown as palpable, as tangible, as his *bottiglia* or his sketch-book: a band of massive, burnished gold, fashioned in antique mold, and adorned with gems all splendid in themselves, however dusky in their history; a circlet from the brow of some stately, far-off Lucumo. For Pensieri-Vani had realized his day-dream at last; he had drawn its secret from an ancient sepulcher, and was even now upon his way Tiberward with an evidence—a single but striking and conclusive one—of his great discovery: carrying eternities to the Eternal. For Viterbo is not more the city of "handsome fountains and beautiful women" than the region round about it is the country of unstoried ruins and elusive sepulchers; and his

protracted sojourn in its environs had yielded him, in the end, his heart's dearest desire.

I have told you of the token that he carried; but let none accuse him, laden with such a serious ponderosity of time and story, of a light-minded frivolity, or an impertinent curiosity, or, above all, of a vulgar penchant for pilfering. How little he took compared with what he might have taken! When the first ray of modern daylight pierced the darkness sealed up in that somber cavern thirty centuries ago, and fell glinting upon gleaming breast-plates, and armlets, and vases, and weapons, and trinkets, what an embarrassment of riches lay before him! What should he take? What single proof and trophy might he permit himself to appropriate? To what extent dared he brave the majesty of the old Lucumo stretched out there before him upon his bier? Only one thing,—one; and if but one, why not the best? He put out his hand and plucked — not irreverently — the crown from the ancient's brow. He did not mean to keep it; he would no sooner have robbed a tomb of thirty centuries than one of three. No; the crown, having served his end, should be returned to its proper place, and the stern old noble, discrowned in secret, should shortly be recrowned openly and with honor.

The Cavaliere, then, kept quite unimpaired his sense of honesty,—honesty in its most palpable, every-day form; but had he kept his sense of delicacy? Well, I repeat that he was not actuated by motives of mere idle curiosity, nor prompted by a morbid desire to probe after the cloaked and the forbidden. He was far from insensible to the thought of the tomb's hoary

mystery and dread,—far from meaning essentially to violate the sanctity of sepulture, no matter what the gulf of time, and race, and long-drawn differentiations of manner, and custom, and belief, that separated him from the prostrate lord before his gaze; but—he was modern and an archæologist. Let them see the token, he said; then we will return together, restore the diadem, reseal the tomb, and leave the old Etruscan to his own. I cannot shield him from my own devoirs; but I may at least guard him against the labels of the museum and the tender mercies of the tourist.

This high and mighty Lars,—how long he slept! Through the downfall of his own country's power; through Rome's career; through Belisarius's battles and the Exarchate's decline; through the inroads of Saracen pirates; through the struggles of Guelph and Ghibelline; through the brief day of the Medici—Florentine and Roman; through the petty tyrannies of Lorraine and the transmogrifications of the Corsican; and on to the Unification, with the hated Roman city, so long defied and so valiantly resisted, again in the ascendant. And now, who came to wake him, and what manner of world was it upon which he found himself invited to look out? Could none of a thousand trampling Cæsars, and anathematizing popes, and heaven-daring emperors have come to his bedside, and extended a helping hand, that he must rely upon the chance courtesy of an obscure and puny student? Had there been no leisure moment in all the tumultuous centuries of blood, and battle, and contending heroes, that he must wait for such a day

as this,—a day so timid, so puerile, so invertebrate? A thought more or less like this flitted elusively through the Cavaliere's mind; but it did not stay the hand he laid upon the ponderous portal of that sepulchral habitation. I have more than once heard my hero rather disdainfully disclaim to represent the age; yet it may be that he misrepresents it in a less degree than he imagines. But for the Cavaliere and his doings this much, in the end, may be said: if he awakened the Lucumo, it was his fixed intention to put him to sleep again. He could not escape the spirit of the age; but he could do the next best thing, and make a compromise with it.

But there are few who find themselves able to push their plans through to a perfectly satisfactory completion, and the Cavaliere, as it turned out, was little more successful than the rest of us. For he never reached Rome at all, and his fancied crowning of the antique warrior-priest was by no means so felicitously well-rounded a ceremony as he could have desired. He had scarce left the Ciminian Forest so far behind as to have passed the castle of Ronciglione, when the friends toward whom he was journeying actually met him on the highway, after all. The rickety little *diligenza*, which a turn in the road, just then, brought into view, arrested itself abruptly in its own dust-cloud, and an instant later Pensieri-Vani, with a mingled feeling of pleasure and dismay, discerned the dismounting of the Seigneur of Hors-Concours. The Seigneur was at once followed by three or four other friends, and the whole party, running up, began to shower their congratulations upon him.

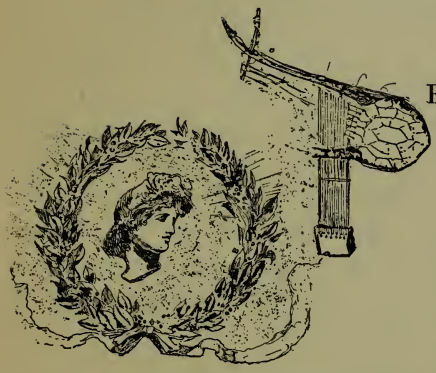
Pensieri-Vani was much touched and flattered by this encounter; but it cannot be denied that for a moment he felt as one feels whom an impatient auditor helps out with a word: he would have preferred finishing his discourse in his own way. However, he immediately fortified himself for an extended and unavoidable ellipsis; and the entire group, turning their faces northward, prepared to accompany him back to—back to—I cannot tell you; I was never told myself. The Cavaliere would never name the spot to me, and none of the others were ever afterward able to determine its situation. I know only that it was as remote and inaccessible as well might have been; for the Etruscans, in rearing their tumuli, had very little regard for the comfort and convenience of the moderns. I venture that the Cavaliere's discovery was in the vicinity of Castel d'Asso, for they did not reach the place, I am told, until the following day, and well on toward noon at that; but whether this tomb was in range with previous discoveries, or was a detached and unrelated affair of its own, I shall not pretend to say. The latter would be nearer the truth, perhaps, for I gather that he had some difficulty in finding it again. But the one significant fact in connection with this excursion I do know, although knowledge of it came to me—through private channels—something more than a year later. They did find the tomb,—after some extended research, for the Cavaliere's *contadino* was distinctly stupid,—but they did not find its occupant. The couch was there,—the armor, the urns, the weapons; but the stark and rigid form of the old Lucumo had vanished.

The crown had come back, but there was no head on which to place it. Only a handful of fine dust remained upon the bier, and served to index the mystery. The old warrior, after having triumphed for threescore years over the chances of war, and the dangers of fire and flood,—after sleeping calm and undisturbed through the tempests and earthquakes of three thousand years,—had crumbled pitifully away to nothing before the vagrant breezes of a summer day. The Cavaliere's friends—he had not told them of the old man whose crown he had presumed to seize—showed the appreciative delight of true *cognoscenti* as they reviewed the frescos on the rock-hewn walls, and fingered the various objects that surrounded the vacant couch; but the Cavaliere's pleasure was sadly incomplete, and the Cavaliere's conscience began to make itself felt. He had done an evil thing. He had not been able altogether to justify himself even at the beginning; what, then, was he to think of himself at the end? To him that handful of ashes seemed the quintessence of a high disdain; he felt himself choking in an atmosphere of a fierce and unquenchable contempt. The stern old warrior-priest, who might have wakened to a Nero, a Hildebrand, a Torquemada, a Napoleon, had been invited to rest his blinking and startled gaze upon a Garrison, a Nightingale, a Peabody. Slumbering through the long ages wherein might made right, he had been called back to light to participate in an epoch of invertebrate sentimentalism. Drunk on deep draughts of blood and iron, his reviver now sought to force him to munch the dipped toast of a flabby humani-

tarianism, and to sip the weak tea of brotherly love. This refreshment he had loftily declined. The Cavaliere, humbled and ashamed, laid the crown upon the bier, and without a word passed up and out into the sunlight. Then, with the assistance of his wondering comrades, he resealed the tomb, obliterated all external trace of its existence, imposed an oath of secrecy on every one present, and thoughtfully returned to Viterbo. He spent many years, subsequently, within the bounds of what we term Etruria, engaged in study of this and that, and traveling with leisurely content the highways and byways of that lovely and mysterious land; and while it cannot be claimed that he ever after ordered his ways with an unimpeachable discretion,—though on this point you may judge for yourselves,—yet he always thought twice before venturing to part the mystic veil which men call "B. C.," and never again in his life did he attempt to open an Etruscan tomb.

II

PISA: MAN PROPOSES; WOMAN DISPOSES



ENSIERI-VANI, as I have endeavored to set forth, possessed a peculiarly contented disposition. "Parva, sed apta mihi" was his motto, and envy was almost a stranger to his heart. In fact, there were not a dozen people in the world capable of arousing this feeling in his breast. Perhaps there was only one,—the Seigneur of Hors-Concours.

Hors-Concours called himself a Frenchman or an Italian as the exigencies of the case required, or as his own fluctuating feelings and preferences prompted him. His small patrimony up in the Alps of Savoy was some few miles within the borders of France, but his person could usually be found a good many miles within the borders of Italy, whose manners and language were quite a part of his second nature, if not of his first. It was not the Italian part of him, however, that awoke Pensieri-Vani's envy, for he himself

had Italian relations of sufficient intimacy and spoke the Italian language as a matter of course. It was the French part, the patrimony in Savoy; not, understand me, the few literal acres of cloud-draped rocks and chestnut-trees to which the Seigneurs of Hors-Concours, at the end of seven centuries, still clung, but the fact, the general idea, of a long-descended seigniorial freehold where one might plant his foot and say: "This is mine; my home is here." A name is a good thing; Pensieri-Vani fully appreciated his own modest little title; but a local habitation and a name,—how much better: a habitation where one could count upon being looked up to; where a respectful peasantry might be relied upon to bob its courtesy and pull off its hat at the right time; where distinguished strangers, passing through, would be promptly, almost spontaneously, directed in order to taste the officialized hospitality of the region. If I have implied too distinctly that Hors-Concours was not much at home to discharge the offices of hospitality and to render some palpable return for all the gratuitous reverencings of the country-folk, I can only say that his house was left behind him to be opened freely whenever occasion required, and that the consciousness he carried about with him of an opportunity, at least, to do his duty was not the smallest of his consolations. But it may be said for him that if he was not much at home, he was never far away from home. His Italian connection, though intimate enough, was not remarkable for extensive ramifications, and when he had reached the Val d' Arno he usually felt that he was as far from home as he could reasonably be required to go. In general, he found

himself pretty well satisfied with Florence or Pisa, and neither of these cities — between which he passed most of his time — is at an immeasurable distance from the Piedmontese frontier.

It was probably the presence in Pisa of Hors-Concours that occasioned the presence there of Pensieri-Vani. There, too, the Cavaliere found the *contadini* quite as amiable as he could have desired the mountain-folk of the Hauts Rochers de Hors-Concours to be, and was gratified, in addition, by a good many other suavities that only a Tuscan town can offer. For Pisa, at any time, is a pleasure, and at certain times, when all favorable conditions combine, a positive delight. For a calm, tranquil, reposeful pleasure, one that comes quietly but sinks in deeper and deeper until it fills you full of peace and wraps you up in "measureless content," I know of nothing that compares with a stroll through the Pisan streets at an hour or so before sunset. Those streets, so calm, so still, so swept and garnished, so silent, so uneventful, so filled with a sweet emptiness of sunshiny radiance declining into shade, were capable of soothing the Cavaliere with a perfect potency that no poppy perfume, no falling minor cadence, nor any cunning and sleep-laden syrup could emulate. And when, at a later hour, he threw away his poppy and emerged upon the tempered bustle of the slow-curving Arno, just as the sun in its setting scattered a glory of rays from behind the machicolations of the Torre Guelfa over *quais* and bridges and the smooth-slipping Arno itself,— or, a little later still, joined the gay May-throng that flocked pleasantly through the intricacies of the darkling Passeggiata, while the moon lit up the

towers of Oltr' Arno and threw a dancing glimmer on the water below, and the long curving lines of light doubled themselves sympathetically in the same element,— then, when he silently pressed the Seigneur's arm, or the Seigneur his, each one knew just what the other meant without any waste of words. Ah, that sweep of the Arno at Pisa is a wonderful thing!

It was on the Lung' Arno, of course, that the Cavaliere had his lodgings, and it was to the southern side of it that he gave his preference. His windows were cunningly disposed to catch the Torre Guelfa off to the left, and the mountains of La Verruca off to the right above the varied line of palace-tops that followed the curve of the stream. He had a little *appartamento di garzone* of two or three small and simply furnished rooms, and a pleasant-faced Assunta of forty-eight or fifty to make his *caffè* and to dust his books. Assunta, of course, could do much more than this; she understood the starching of collars *de profundis*, as he expressed it, and could manage a little dinner of five or six very competently, indeed,— though, truth to tell, the Cavaliere did not dine much at home, for the long line of *caffè* and *ristoranti* over the waterway — he used, mostly, the Ponte di Mezzo — satisfied, pretty well, his modest requirements; and then there was the Contessa Nullaniuna, who always had a place for him at her table whenever he chose to occupy it. His windows gave to the north,— not a bad thing in the Pisan spring,— and he sat at them and looked out rather more than many less quiet persons could find reason for. Indeed, the Prorege of Arcopia, who, on a certain occasion left

his orbit so far as to make a sojourn of some months in the Val d' Arno, once asked him what there was to take up so much of his attention; there seemed to be very little going on, and no appreciable change from day to day. To which the Cavaliere could hardly do less than reply that to him what had gone on was quite as interesting as what was going on, and that nothing was more gratifying, from his point of view, than that very absence of change which had taken his Excellency's attention,— since any change would be a change for the worse. I suspect, however, that the Cavaliere at his window accomplished a good deal of desultory reading,— though not so exclusively in Kugler and Cavalcaselle as many persons imagined. Certainly his attendance at the window had nothing to do with his sketching; for before he had been in his lodging a single week he had taken down the whole of the Lung' Arno over and over again. If any further explanation of his window-haunting habit be demanded, I can only say that in him Quietism was pretty successfully secularized: he knew how to sit still, and occasionally enjoyed doing so.

Life in Pisa, as I may have indicated, is not strongly accentuated by positive happenings; incident is unusual, and drama quite unknown. One's first visit to the Quattro Fabbriche may indeed rank as an event; but the Cavaliere's initial devoirs had been paid to that quarter of the town many years before. The slant of the Campanile had no longer the least obliquity to his eyes, and the echo within the Baptistery was as familiar as the most threadbare air of "Norma" or "Lucia." The road up to La Verruca was strictly

terra cognita; S. Pietro in Grado was no longer a vague illusion; and the highway to Lucca had long since been made familiar by repeated traversings. The last feature of Pisa to become known to him was the interior of the Teatro Comunale, and with that, a few weeks before his departure, he became perfectly acquainted. It was toward the end of the Carnival-time that something took place which the uneventfulness of his previous months there seemed to raise to the dignity of an event. This was an operatic début.

There is no evidence that the débutante took any steps to solicit the Cavaliere's distinguished patronage, or that any one, notwithstanding his recognized position in musical circles, made the least attempt to secure his favorable interest; so if he became somewhat deeply involved in the matter before the end was reached, it was simply his own generosity and goodness of heart that brought it all about. The young girl was a stranger,— more, a foreigner. Her precise nationality, I believe, he never made any effort to determine; but her isolated position touched his sense of chivalry; his imagination, which was always giving him more or less trouble, added a *nuance* of the friendless and forlorn to a picture that in other minds might have remained but a composition (in a few hard, definite lines) of bare, unsympathetic fact; and he determined that with the moral support of Hors-Concours, himself a connoisseur, he would call upon this detached damsel and present his respectful regards.

If the Signorina, as the two called her in their talks, had not been at home, nothing more would probably

have happened. But she was at home, and her reception of them was such an unconsciously perfect combination of confiding inexperience and tremulous appeal, permeated with such a modest sense of merit, such a gentle confidence in her own ability, that our two poor gentlemen succumbed at once. The début, they determined, should be a great success,— an ovation, even, if they could make it so; and they decided to put into immediate action the social forces at their disposal. The social forces, in this case, began with the Contessa Nullaniuna and ended with the Prorege of Arcopia.

The Contessa, who was universally ranked among the *beaux esprits*, and who regarded herself as a woman of genius whose peculiar gifts — I will tell you some time what they were — had never received their full measure of recognition, fell in with the idea at once; and when her cautious inquiries as to the young aspirant's abilities were answered,— the Cavaliere told her not so much what he knew of them as what he hoped from them,— she signified that her support might be counted upon. This was all in the days when the Contessa's emancipation, while indeed under way, was far from complete; she could still take the part of chaperon without occasioning any such elevation of eyebrows as a like attempt on her part might have produced a year or two later. But it is only right to say that the Count himself was a sad dog, without the least perception of his wife's score of charming qualities; in fact, I have heard it said — but the Contessa herself never wasted many words on him, so why should we? She promised to provide an

auxiliary corps composed of the *jeunesse dorée* of the nobility, on whose concerted efforts the two gentlemen might rely; and the Prorege, whose good nature was proverbial, and whose interest in matters operatic was perennial, graciously consented to honor the performance with his presence. The Prorege's compliance, let me say, was not merely gracious; it was almost heroic. He was strictly a connoisseur, and his island-state, he was not ashamed to boast, enjoyed an annual opera season unequaled anywhere between Carniola and the Morea. He should see nothing better than the Arcopian subventions were capable of achieving, and he was likely to see something not nearly so good. He suffered from inferiority immensely, and from mediocrity hardly less; but he would take the chances for friendship's sake, and come,—if proper accommodation could be made for him: he felt that for him to occupy any other place than the middle box in the chief tier would make the occasion hopelessly unbalanced and deranged. He furthermore agreed to smile from such a post as benignly as a man of his age could be expected to. Though no longer young, it enraged him to be considered middle-aged; and the garment of benignity, as we all know, hangs gracefully only on persons who have passed the age of fifty.

The Contessa, prompted and accompanied by Pensieri-Vani, made during the afternoon a dozen or so visits of state. It was the Cavaliere's desire to have the occasion as noticeable socially as he hoped it would be artistically, and he wished that the ladies of the resident nobility might be sufficiently inter-

ested to come, and to come dressed. Hors-Concours employed the same time at the University and among the first comers that the late afternoon brought out upon the Lung' Arno. He even despatched messengers afield who summoned a couple of counts from their estates near Livorno and allured a marchese all the way from Lucca. He knew two or three lieutenants stationed at Siena, and a message to them brought half a dozen officers from the garrison there. These matters accomplished, the executive committee met in general session, partitioned and captained the house, and arranged all the details of the ovation. The Seigneur counseled a silver laurel-wreath and a bracelet set with rubies, for instance; and then a sonnet, which they might compose between them, could be printed on pink paper, and, at the proper moment, might come fluttering down by the hundred (as he had once seen done at Milan) from the dizzy heights of the *paradiso*. But the Cavaliere pointed out that their idea of the beneficiary's abilities was much too nebulous as yet to justify any such preparations as these, and that silver laurel-wreaths and the like were not to be picked up here and there at a moment's notice. In the end they decided to make the demonstration largely floral. For the *cavatina adagio cantabile* of the young nun in *Atto Primo* a large but simple bouquet of white lilies might answer. In the trio toward the end of *Atto Secondo*, at court, the motives of the scoundrelly grand duke and the intriguing maid of honor might be hinted at in two or three set pieces of variegated roses. In the third act, where the persecuted maiden has her long *scena* in the

gipsy glen, whither she has gone to learn her fate, the semi-pastoral nature of her surroundings would justify, perhaps, a pair of love-birds in a gilded cage wreathed with violets and smilax. And in the fourth act the tremendous scene in which the dread monster slays her gray-haired sire and the hapless maid goes raving mad upon her marriage morn should be followed by a great fusillade of bouquets, a storm of *evvivas* and *bravas*, the house should "rise," and if enthusiasm could be made to mount so far, the students should draw the prima donna's carriage home in triumph, and she should treat the enraptured throng to a serenade from her balcony, under the chaperonage of La Nullaniuna and the distinguished patronage of the body of the nobility. To such lengths can pure benevolence and sympathy go when once started on the way.

I shall have but little to say regarding the person in whose behalf so many efforts were made. The Cavaliere may have been interested in the Signorina, but our interest, of course, should be in him; and if I give any account of the début at all, it is altogether because you have a right to know to what extent his little plan succeeded. The first act, then, went off just as he had hoped. The house was crowded, and was as brilliant as could have been expected in a provincial capital. The Prorege sat well to the front of his box, and wore, like the dear good fellow that he was, a round half-dozen of his most esteemed decorations. The débutante was pretty and interesting; she felt herself among friends, and after her first nervousness had passed off she revealed a very pretty talent. The audi-

ence seemed disposed to be pleased, and the applause provoked by the presentation of the bouquet was sufficient to precipitate a recall at the end of the act. In the second act she did even better; her vocalism gained in confidence and brilliancy, her acting in fire and fervor. Yet the house, as the Cavaliere could not but feel as he searched out the Seigneur's gaze across the auditorium, did not warm to correspond. As the second floral demonstration passed up,—eclipsed, as their first had been, by others that indicated an intimacy of acquaintance and a prodigality of expenditure which left them far behind,—the startled Cavaliere, who had meant to persuade, not to compel, became conscious of a cold wave blowing over the place; the applause was very meager, and such notes of admiration as were expressed at all seemed pointed almost exclusively—except as concerned the officers and a few of the students—to the baritone and the contralto. As the third act progressed toward its impassioned finale, the house sank into a cold silence which to the nonplussed Cavaliere seemed burdened with a contemptuous apathy. The love-birds passed up through an atmosphere of mere cold and quizzical curiosity, and piercing the silence there came a single hiss,—one, but from an influential quarter. The Prorege had retired to the back of his box. The Contessa bit her lip in silence behind her fan, but her eyes flashed, for that hiss had come from one on whom she had confidently counted. The Cavaliere, pale and disconcerted, saw his own fears reflected in the face of a young man in a box opposite,—a tall, slender, blond youth with

a combined redundancy of mustache and paucity of chest which but one land in all the wide world produces. If the forecasting of the immediate future were able to make a total stranger apprehensive, could he himself longer bear to stay? He took up his hat, and left his post. He saw his mistake,—the house quite refused to be bought up and delivered; but the result of his mistake he dared not stay to view,—the coming cataclysm he had not the heart to witness. He left the building with a cold sinking in his breast, and went out into the Passeggiata, where, a moment later, Hors-Concours joined him, and where they exchanged regrets and self-condemnations *ad libitum*. It was a failure, and they made it so. With the best intentions, they had incurred the worst. The Cavaliere had attempted to pull the wires as a kind of special providence, and had been ignominiously unveiled. He had perhaps made himself ridiculous, and had, in all probability, too, robbed his protégée of such future as Fortune, until now not too pointedly challenged, may have been holding in store for her. The two spent, in fact, as *mauvais* a *quart d'heure* as one is often called upon to endure.

As they entered with increasing discomfort and depression upon their second *quart d'heure*, something occurred to startle them both; for with a total unexpectedness an unmistakable burst of applause came out to them from the theater. As it died away, a few notes in a high, sweet soprano voice floated out upon the evening air. Presently another burst of applause followed. Shortly after, the mingled strains of four or five mixed voices, supported by a full

volume of choral and orchestral harmony, swelled out through the open windows. Then came another outbreak of approval,—a great union of *bravas* and *evvivas*. The tumult grew with every moment; the applause became more vociferous and more continuous, and at last the doors swung open, the throng rushed forth, and the débutante, clamorously surrounded by an eager band of *giovani* Pisani, was escorted in triumph through the Lung' Arno from the theater to her hotel. Without the help of the Cavaliere and his friends — in spite of their help — she had worked out with pluck and ability her own salvation. The Cavaliere recognized at once the limitations that nature and circumstance had placed upon him. He perceived that he was less fitted to play the part of special providence than he had previously supposed. Called upon to receive numerous congratulations upon the success of his protégée,— everybody knew his part in the affair now,— he bore up with a composed humility that struck Hors-Concours as the most touching thing in the world; and he brought out from this experience the immeasurable consolation that comes from perceiving that very frequently in this sadly twisted world things, if only left to their own courses, have a way of coming out right, after all.

III

TUSCAN TOWNS: THE "MADONNA INCOGNITA"

THE PROREGE, after that little experience at Pisa, where he had so narrowly escaped becoming involved in what he was pleased to term "complications," and where his dignity had been snatched, one may say, as a brand from the burning, seemed to feel that a departure from the scene (a departure arranged to take place, of course, without undue precipitation and *à propos* of nothing except a natural and easily understood desire for change) might form the most appreciative tribute to the merciful narrowness of his escape. His first thought called for nothing less than an im-

mediate return to Arcopia itself, where, notwithstanding the peculiar circumstances attending his departure from it,— circumstances that I shall presently touch upon,—he felt that his long-neglected yet, as he hoped, still loyal subjects might be depended upon to design and execute a signally worthy and flattering reception; for they belonged to a race quite capable of imposing the requisite degree of plasticity upon the expression of their emotions, and might very reasonably be expected to translate, with unerring accuracy, their long pent up feelings into banners and salvos and triumphal arches and possibly bands of young women in white robes and starry crowns. But his second thought suggested that although he had forgiven the Arcopians, the Arcopians might not yet have forgiven him; and it also occurred to him that in matters of government the great principle of *laissez-faire* had hitherto been seldom accorded adequate opportunity for unimpeded play, and that he might therefore perhaps contribute as successfully as in any other mode to the pleasure and profit of his people, or at least to the advancement of political economy to the position of an exact science, by letting well enough alone for yet a little longer. It was on this second thought — with a modification — that he proceeded to act. This modification, it might be well to state frankly, came, in set terms, from private intelligence of a certain Perugino, just brought to light, and as yet almost completely unknown, and to be found, should fortune favor, in a certain small mid-Tuscan town. The Prorege loved Arcopia, of course, but he loved Tus-

cany even better; and he was thankful enough for so good an excuse to make a carriage journey toward the Val di Chiana all in the month of May. He arranged the details of the excursion one cool evening on the Lung' Arno at Pisa, as he sat with a few friends before the Caffè dell' Ussero, while the flower-girls were offering their violets and a dark-eyed little boy was performing wonders on a rudely fashioned shepherd's pipe. In the intervals of the demands for the pro-regal coin,— our prince's dignity was not always equal to his good nature,— it was arranged that two of his companions to Montepulciano — I may as well acknowledge that the picture was spoken of as to be found there — should be Pensieri-Vani and Hors-Concours. Pensieri-Vani loved Tuscany more than the Prorege ever dreamt of loving it, but he made no pretense of an inordinate affection for Perugino, whose feminine and finicky genius aroused in him a certain feeling of contemptuous impatience. He told the Prorege so in as many words; but as the Prorege repeated his invitation, and somewhat insistently, too, it may be surmised that his appreciation of the Cavaliere was not founded on grounds altogether and merely artistic. In fact, the Prorege had an ever-present sense of the dues of his position, and if he were about to make an informal excursion through certain of the Tuscan provinces, it was essential that he did so properly attended and accompanied. The Cavaliere, as a gentleman of taste and cultivation, and as an individual, too, who would find no difficulty in gracefully subordinating himself to the great personage whose

society he was invited to share, would be likely to prove an invaluable auxiliary. And if he did not like Perugino, he knew him when he saw him, infallibly. The Prorege could erect a cathedral or conduct an opera from the ground up, or so he thought; but as regarded the great Umbrian master, he dared not accept his own opinion as final.

To inaugurate this artistic expedition, the Cavaliere gave a little dinner at his lodgings in Oltr' Arno, and the Prorege (who lounged away the days of his Tuscan sojourn in fatigue dress, as we may say) graciously accepted an invitation to be present. They ended with a toast to the success of their quest,— their quest for the "Madonna Incognita,"— and then, leaving the graceful Florentine flask empty on the table, they passed on to the *sala*, and sat at dusk at the open windows overlooking the river, while the Cavaliere, seated at the piano in a darkling corner of the room, gave out a pleasant ripple and flow of improvisation until the moon looked in and invited them out for a stroll through the clear-cut shadows of the silent streets. As I say, the Cavaliere played for them. How long he played he himself had no idea; and not one of the others ever thought to count the time. He played with a wonderful ease and facility, with a charming delicacy and sweetness, with an inexhaustible fertility of invention, with a most refined sense of the conditions of place, time, occasion. Hors-Concours, to whom his friend's delightful gift was a never-failing source of pride and pleasure, sat silent with a placid content; and the Prorege, who had never listened to the Cavaliere before, and who was

sadly susceptible for a man of his years, leaned thoughtfully upon the window-sill, and sighed, as he looked up at the first faint stars, a long, deep sigh of utter peace and rest. It almost seemed like Pisa itself — placid, nodding Pisa — set to music. I will tell you at an early opportunity how the Cavaliere gained his title, but not just now.

The Prorege, after this, was more than ever determined that Pensieri-Vani should be one of the party; before this he had always treated him with courtesy, but after this his manner was one of marked consideration, and even of affectionate regard. Music was the Prorege's passion, next to architecture and the decorative arts; and the favored possessor of such a gift as that which the Cavaliere displayed never failed to evoke his generous appreciation and a respect that was almost reverence. Pensieri-Vani, now doubly bound to the pro-regal train, went, of course, as arranged, to Montepulciano; though to have heard his little party denominated a "train" would have caused the Prorege to laugh outright: for they were only six, counting the *vetturino* and the valet, and the carriage, devoid of any distinguishing mark, might have come from a public *rimesa*, as indeed it did. It was fortunate, too, that such was the case; the Prorege's own equipage would never have survived the long-continued journey to which the drive Montepulciano-ward was but the prelude. For the Franciscans of Montepulciano, when met by the ardent demands of the Prorege, confessed a reluctant ignorance — reluctant, but utter and complete — of the supposititious masterpiece. They offered their

views, their wines, their missals, their wood-carvings, their Lippis, their vespers, and their beds,—for the day was now rather far spent,—but they could not offer the slightest information about the "Madonna Incognita." The Prorege sipped their wines indifferently, and listened abstractedly to their vespers, neither being in any degree a substitute for the Perugino; but he accepted their sleeping-accommodations unreservedly, for he was somewhat fatigued and exasperated; besides, he had no idea of betaking his august person to a public inn. A supper of black bread and sugarless tea did more to pull him down than all the glories of a full-flooded Tuscan sunset could do to set him up, and he went to bed rather early in a somewhat dejected condition. But Pensieri-Vani and Hors-Concours, who cared very little what they ate or where they slept when any recherché presentation of artistic products or any notable disclosure of natural phenomena was to be anticipated, sat out in the twinkling starlight for hours after the self-indulgent Prorege had retired, and turned in themselves only when the midnight bell sounded hoarsely from the old cinque-cento tower above their heads; both considering, though they never breathed it to their host, that full recompense for a missing Perugino might not altogether fail on a summer night in the Gothic loggia of a Tuscan monastery.

But the dejection of the Prorege received an appreciable lightening on the dawn of the morrow, and that, too, at almost the very moment set for their return to Pisa. For just as the *vetturino* was bringing the equipage to order, and the monastery court was

filled with a sort of tempered ecclesiastical bustle over the departure of the Prorege's party, a certain obscure, blear-eyed old brother came ambling forward to say that perhaps their search might not turn out fruitless, after all; he had heard tell, he thought, of some picture or other lately brought to light at either Montalcino or Montefiascone, which might be the one they were in search of. The Prorege, instantly detecting the similarity of names, began to beam with hope, and could either have hugged this unprepossessing old *frate* for joy, or have shaken him for his stupidity. Which was the more likely place? he demanded. The old fellow could hardly say; but Montalcino was the nearer. Was the picture a Perugino? Ah, it might be; he had heard it said that — yes, probably; oh, yes,— undoubtedly a Perugino. Was it a Madonna? Who could tell?—and yet some one had been overheard to remark that — The Prorege loftily cut him short, and briefly ordered the *vetturino* to take the road for Montalcino.

At the risk of having you declare that I have overstated the depth and constancy of the ruler of Arcopia's good nature, I must confess that the Prorege this morning was in a frame of mind when it was an easy matter to rub him the wrong way; and it was the ungracious part thrust upon the charming town of Pienza, their first stopping-place, to rub him rather severely. As he passed in survey the various churches and palaces which the felicitous fortune of Æneas Sylvius had permitted him to erect in his native town, his will and his architectural preferences quite unhampered by local opposition and pecuniary difficul-

ties, the poor Prorege gave vent to a succession of deep inward groans. He contrasted the good fortune of the happy Piccolomini in Pienza with his own *dura sorte* at Arcopia, where his last great architectural project had been cruelly clipped of its fair proportions by an unlooked-for accession of Arcopian economy. He had set his heart upon embellishing the long façade of the viceregal residence in the Piazza Grande with a magnificent portico of twenty neo-Ionic columns, each of the twenty to be of one unbroken block of *cipollino*, and the frieze of their common entablature to be enriched with certain sumptuous designs of Roman cosmato-work; but the Consiglio Maggiore, much to his astonishment and dismay, had made difficulties,—had almost, if I may venture to pen the words, made opposition. The funds were expected to come from the public treasury, and the public treasury, they said, was hardly prepared just then to stand the strain. The Prorege in formal session declared that in a matter of this kind the last thing he thought of was his own personal gratification; the first consideration with him was ever the honor and glory of Arcopia. None of his drafts on the public treasury, he maintained, had been exclusively for his own individual benefit: whenever his private desires were to be gratified, his own private purse met the charge. What, now, but his delicate conscientious scruples had condemned him to navigate the Adriatic by means of any chance craft that might present itself, while his compeer, the Exarch of Albania, cruised through the Levant in a private yacht that was a dream of luxury? Had he not, on

the other hand, made frequent contributions for the public good from his own privy purse? Did not his own share of the annual opera season's expenses equal that drawn from the public treasury and that contributed by the resident nobility together? To all of which the Consiglio made reply — but this is no place to rehearse the controversy. Suffice it to say that the matter had ended in a miserable, sordid compromise, — a compromise derogatory to the viceregal dignity, and degrading to the fair name of the town. The Prorege was permitted a colonnade of twelve columns, without any cosmato-work whatever. His indignation was boundless. He had never been free from the harassings and the embarrassments that must annoy the mere representative of a monarch who is himself bound down by all manner of constitutional restrictions and limitations, and now, more than ever, it seemed to him that a mild despotism was the only rational and practicable form of government. In the first hour of his rage he thought of giving up Arcopia altogether, and of going straight to Paris for a permanent residence; but, as his anger cooled, he found it advisable to adopt a measure a little less extreme. To show his sense of the indignity placed upon him by his subjects, he would leave them for a time and arrange for a stay in, perhaps, Florence; then, when his subjects, in deep contrition, should recall him, he should be within distance to respond at once. But one thing was certain: the viceregal company, ballet, fiddlers, and all, should be transferred to Ancona, or Parma, or even, if need be, to Grätz, and the abomination of (musical) desolation should brood

over the Arcopian capital. This fell determination accounts for the presence of the Prorege in Tuscany; but a few months of his self-imposed exile had largely soothed the rancor in his breast, and he was now almost ready, as I have elsewhere indicated, to turn his steps back toward his banned and blighted city. It is easy to understand, now, why Pienza should have proven so irritating to him, and to feel, too, that his presence that evening in the theater at Pisa was an exhibition of almost heroic fortitude.

Well, the Prorege passed on through Pienza, quite refusing to dismount or even to halt, and pressed on to Montalcino. I shall not set down the details of his journey, for really the political situation in Arcopia is a theme more interesting to me than a dozen Perugi-nos, and if I go on to give the conclusion of the search for the "Madonna Incognita," it is only because I have given the beginning of it. To be brief, our searchers met with little better success at Montalcino than at Montepulciano. They finally unearthed a weak-kneed, weazened parish-priest who had recently received a visit from a brother priest who came some miles from the northward; and this friend had dropped a word relative to a certain painting that a friend of his, a Count So-and-so, had lately come into possession of. And this ecclesiastic was to be found in San Gimi-gnano. His Excellency could doubtless reach Oliveto Maggiore, or possibly Siena itself, by dusk; and from Siena to San Gimignano, next day, was but a trifle of two or three hours. This thing his Excellency directly concluded to do. So with a frown of impatience he turned his back upon Montalcino, and the futile smiles

of Monte Amiata, and struck northward through the sand-hills toward Siena. In that ancient capital he would find such lodgment and repose as befitted one so storm-tossed and so august, and would depute to his companions the excursion to San Gimignano, which was sure to involve much worry and fatigue, and might bring him no nearer to his goal than before.

Accordingly, the next morning at nine, Hors-Concours and Pensieri-Vani left Siena by the Porta Camollia in a brisk little chaise, and lunched at twelve under the *belle torri* of the most unique of Tuscan towns. It was a delicious drive quite of itself, and the great end in view added a piquancy to the excursion that not every one who posts toward San Gimignano can hope to enjoy. The weather was charming—bright, yet cool; the country was ravishing, being in the first full green of spring; and the country-folk, flocking to or from some great *festa*, filled the winding and undulating roads with a gay excess of life and color. The cypressed villas, the ruinous old abbeys in delightful Gothic brickwork, the *campanili* of village churches rising from the olived slopes of hillsides, the twisted graces of vine-wreathed *pergole*, the wide flapping straw hats of the women trudging by, the jauntily carried jackets of the men, the gay romping of blossom-snatching children, the bustle of roadside *osterie*, the slow jolting of ox-carts along the common highway, the sturdy-arched, low-roofed farm-houses, the flowers, the sunshine, the lightly stirring breeze,—all the thousand things that combine in that inexhaustible feast of grace and beauty and social and historical interest

which Tuscany knows so well how to spread,— caused our two friends more than once quite to lose sight of the great undertaking that they had been commissioned to carry through; and, for the half-hour previous to the first appearance of San Gimignano's high-set coronet of towers, I doubt if the "Madonna Incognita" received from them the tribute of a single thought.

Once within the town, however, the Madonna became the subject of the most poignant interest. The good ecclesiastic upon whom the Prorege had relied to terminate their peregrinations, or at least to indicate the manner in which they themselves might terminate them, was away from home for a day or two, and his present whereabouts was quite unknown. And the Count on his estate near Colle? they asked of the maid-servant who met them in her master's absence. Oh, the Count Nonsivede? He had gone only yesterday to Volterra, to carry a picture to an acquaintance of his who was a dealer in *antichità*,— a quaint little old fellow who — but a truce to the maid's chatter. The picture, at last, was distantly in sight. It was at Volterra, and on to Volterra they must hasten, after sending back word to the Prorege to join them there as promptly as possible. For the first time during the chase Pensieri-Vani began to feel a real interest in the "Unknown Madonna"; he resolved that he would devote himself, to the exclusion of all else, to the task of bringing this missing maid and mother to the light. He cared no more than before for the picture as a Perugino pure and simple, but as a Perugino that stubbornly refused to materialize it had begun to waken his liveliest interest.

And yet, when the Prorege arrived at Volterra,— most bleak and dreary of towns,— with what a tale were his two young friends constrained to meet him! The picture, still on its flight, had gone yet farther to the north; the antiquarian to whom they had traced it had just left town with it, and had carried it — of all places in the world, the Prorege gasped — to Pisa. It might be found in a certain little street in Oltr' Arno: so the antiquarian's grandson informed the impatient party; and the impatient party, scarce waiting to hear the boy's last words, started off post-haste to the very town from which their long quest had been entered upon.

For now, if the Prorege designed to become the owner of the picture, every hour had its value. He trembled to think of the pitfalls dug for the precious Perugino in Pisa. There was the opulent Duke of Avon and Severn in his *appartamento* at the Vittoria, who would give almost any price the owner might demand. If he missed the prize, there was the art-crazed old Margravine of Schwahlbach-Schreckenstein at the Pension Ludwig, who would move heaven and earth to gain possession of it. If she failed, there was still the boundlessly wealthy Mr. Occident, who had taken for the season the whole Palazzo Camera-Mobiglio, and who would pay a price at which even the Duke or the Margravine would stick. And last and worst, there was the agent of that odious Florentine picture-dealer, Ladronini, rather than see the painting fall into whose hands the Prorege would hear, and with delight, that it had been burned to ashes or torn completely to shreds and tatters. If

Arcopia was ever to be adorned with this masterpiece and peace-offering, these various people, all and singular, must be circumvented, anticipated, outwitted, duped, defrauded—anything, everything; all considerations of honor and courtesy must be thrown to the winds, for in a case like this the end amply justified the means.

It was almost dusk when the viceregal equipage traversed Oltr' Arno and entered the Via del Quadro. But it was light enough for the Prorege to observe, with a horrible pang, a cab standing before the door of No. 14, and to see an old woman who had just hobbled out get into the cab and drive rapidly away. He gave a deep, anguished groan; for the old woman was none other than the Margravine of Schwahlbach-Schreckenstein herself in flesh and blood. With what an excess of trepidation and suspense did the whole party immediately descend and begin the dark and crooked ascent that led, flight after flight, roofward! How the Prorege, once before the door, could scarcely nerve himself to knock! There was still a chance, of course—but a chance how poor, how slender—one in a hundred, one in a thousand. The poor Prorege, with a bit of dumb-show, signified to Pensieri-Vani to take the thing into his own hands, and to proceed as he deemed proper in the premises. Pensieri-Vani promptly knocked, and the door, after a moment's delay, opened—and on the thousandth chance. The man was there, the picture was there, the opportunity to purchase was there. For the Margravine, after throwing a quick glance upon the canvas, had given vent to an indifferent "humph" and posted off again; and

no one else had yet had an opportunity to inspect it. The Prorege demanded its instant forthcoming. The little old man settled his wig, walked to a corner of the room, drew back a small black curtain, and with an air of timid expectation stood waiting for the verdict. The Prorege gave one look of despair at the picture, threw a glance of utter disappointment and defeat upon his companions in the quest, and sank limp and woebegone into the nearest chair. The picture was no more a Perugino than he was a Perugino, or the Campo Santo was a Perugino, or the moon was a Perugino. It was not a copy of Perugino, nor an imitation of Perugino, nor of the school of Perugino. There was nothing of Perugino in it, or of it, or about it. *Accidente! Accidente!*

The poor little antiquarian acknowledged, with a rueful indignation, that the picture before them was not a Perugino. Neither was it, as his other visitor had expected to find it, a Del Sarto. But it was, he felt sure — and his weak old voice trembled with a triumphant protest — it was a — Pensieri-Vani jumped up and clapped his hand over the dealer's mouth. If the Margravine had a present craze for Del Sarto, — he knew about how her fads ran, — and could just now discern the merits of no other painter; and if the Prorege had an equal craze for Perugino to the exclusion of all other masters, why should not he himself, taking advantage — a justifiable advantage — of so much narrowness and bigotry, improve the opportunity to possess himself of a gem whose beauty neither of the others had been able to perceive? The "Unknown Madonna" — unknown even now that they were face to face with her — was not, indeed, a Peru-

gino, not a Del Sarto, but, as a moment's inspection satisfied him, an undoubted and unrivaled Sodoma. And Sodoma was his delight. He could never hope to possess a Raphael, but Sodoma was a sufficiently satisfying substitute for even the great Roman; and here was the chance of a lifetime presented to him. Only one question troubled him: could he afford this luxury? He shortly decided that he could; luxuries, after all, were more important than necessities; and that month in the Engadine he must postpone until some other season. Then the picture — to weigh an unavoidable commercial consideration — was worth vastly more than he was asked to pay, and would assuredly appreciate on his hands. He would not buy it as a mercantile transaction,— he had an indignant horror of speculating in a great painter's brain and skill,— but it was proper enough for him to anticipate contingencies and prepare for future emergencies. He satisfied himself that he had not allowed enthusiasm to push caution aside, and he purchased the fugitive Madonna then and there and transferred it at once to his *appartamento*. The Prorege elaborately feigned a sympathetic interest in the Cavaliere's acquisition, and concealed with a fair degree of success his own heart-broken disappointment; but he was only too plainly not himself; and after moping about Pisa for a week or two, during which he suffered much from the Cavaliere's complacency and the enthusiastic interest evoked from all quarters by the "Madonna Incognita," he quietly got his things together, put his household in marching order, and went back to Arcopia.

IV

SIENA: A VAIN ABASEMENT

IT is not to be supposed that the Margravine of Schwahlbach-Schreckenstein was the only one of the Prorege's competitors who paid the tribute of a visit to the "Unknown Madonna," as it rested after its long journey at the house in the Via del Quadro, though she, indeed, was the only one of them whose arrival antedated his own. For the Duke of Avon and Severn presented himself there also; he reached the ground a day or two later, and it is the purpose of these few succeeding pages to explain why it was that he did not appear before.

The Prorege's little party, in the course of its journeyings, reached Siena one afternoon at about four o'clock. Our prince's companions established themselves at a suitable inn, while he himself fell back

with much tranquillity and confidence upon a certain noble family of the town — a family whose name has adorned the page of history for centuries, and whose state was still such as to enable them to deal justly with any strolling viceroy. This state was manifest partly in a grave footman who was wont to appear at intervals in the doorway at the head of the great staircase in knee-breeches and silk stockings, and who, with a kind of patient pity, would direct applicants of the ordinary type for lodging and sustenance to the *pension* on the floor just below — an institution sufficiently advertised by the groups of local ineffectives and incapables that were accustomed to lounge about the great doorway which served all the occupants of the palace in common. And it was this impressive person who, some time during the early evening, opened the door on the upper landing for the egress of his master and his master's guest, who, yielding to the ordinary human craving for society and entertainment, were on the point of sallying forth to the *caffè*.

As the Prorege reached the first landing on the way down, the door of the *pension* opened, and it admitted a young man who was obviously in search of society and entertainment too. The hall outside was indifferently lighted, and the glare from within fell in such a way as not to illumine his face; but the youth was tall and slender, and he was met at the door itself by a young woman who greeted him with much cordiality in a language which the Prorege did not speak. The prince, who was accustomed to overlooking the informalities of certain *forestieri*, and

who was not without some sympathetic interest in the concerns of youth, smiled benignly and accompanied the Marchese down and out.

Arrived at the *caffè*, the Prorege found no trace of Pensieri-Vani and Hors-Concours, whom he had expected to meet there; but after he had seated himself, a casual glance over his shoulder revealed to him the presence of another of the Pisan *habitués*, and the last of them that he would have looked to see. He knew in an instant those grizzled temples, that haughty nose, and those hard, cold eyes,— features that had more than once caused our amiable friend a mistaken pang of envy,— for he was almost touching elbows with the Duke of Avon and Severn.

The Duke and the Prorege during their residence on the Lung' Arno, while the one was awaiting a reconciliation with his people, and the other was endeavoring to revive the traditions that insular rank and wealth and genius had left behind them in Pisa half a century before, had agreed in the exercise of a civil coldness which was not far removed from an armed neutrality. Our sympathetic and expansive prince had already seen the rôle of *civis Britannicus* in other hands, and he knew well enough the danger that a friendly advance stood of translation into a confession of inferiority; while, owing to the peculiar optical arrangements of a man who looked on things with one eye as a noble and with the other as a Briton, a willingness to do a favor would infallibly suffer transfiguration into a voluntary act of self-abasement. So the Prorege bowed with a great and

distant gravity, and he inwardly congratulated himself, too, on the absence of the Cavaliere; for the Duke had been a younger son too long to be able now to treat any younger man with much consideration, least of all a young man unassociated with his own hierarchy. Almost his first remarks to the newcomers carried a contemptuous reference to a pair of members of the young Sienese aristocracy who had driven past the *caffè* several times rather noisily in an English dog-cart; the elder of the two wore a standing collar with round corners — like a groom, the Duke said. The Prorege replied carelessly that he did not remember to have seen any grooms in such collars lately. Like an English groom, the Duke rejoined tartly. The Prorege murmured a low "Ah!" and bowed gravely again; while the Marchese, who thus saw his offspring devoted to damnation, preserved a polite and discreet silence.

But the Duke's conversational bark soon passed the rapids of ill-humor, and emerged, more or less inexplicably, into the quiet pool of communicative chattiness. The Prorege, willing to meet him half-way, made one or two civil inquiries about his plans and movements, and so learned, without any great effort, but with a vast and sudden surprise, that Avon was designing to leave in the morning for San Gimignano. No detailed particulars accompanied this announcement, but for the startled Prorege none were needed. He nervelessly dropped his spoon into his coffee, and inwardly wished the enveloping smoke-cloud of the place tenfold denser than it was; for, as far as he knew, not the first step had been taken in his own arrange-

ments for reaching San Gimignano. But he collected himself and composed his features, and remarked, with as much of careless indifference as he could command, that it were a pity to leave so attractive a town as Siena without doing it complete justice. Avon rejoined that he had visited the town before, and more than once. The Prorege inquired if he had yet visited the wood-carving studio behind the House of St. Catherine. The Duke replied that he took but little interest in modern Italian art-work. The Prorege asked if he meant to miss the confirmation at the cathedral in the morning. The Duke responded that he had already attended a similar ceremonial: he had seen the fifty or sixty little girls in blue and pink and saffron, and the fifty or sixty little boys in Sunday suits, being blessed by the archbishop, and being bound across the forehead with black ribbons by the priests; he knew already, thanks, what a carnival in the juvenile ward of a hospital was like.

The Prorege glanced sharply at him with a stifled indignation; he was not accustomed to having his suggestions met in any such manner as this. But he thrust down his pique with a strong hand. The one important thing was that Avon should spend the following forenoon in Siena; a dignity inviolate was now coming to be a secondary consideration.

There was to be a game of *pallone* at the Fortezza that afternoon, the Prorege went on perseveringly; he should be most happy to have the Duke go with him to see it. This was an invitation; the Prorege had distinctly fallen a peg. But the Duke had apparently no great regard for Italian athletics; the game,

as he understood it, involved neither bats nor wickets, and he should find it quite impracticable, he was afraid, to accept. The Prorege, under cover of the marble edge of the table, snapped his finger-nails for pure nervousness, and made another proposition. The Marchese was to drive him in the morning to one of his country-houses a few miles outside the city, and it would be pleasant to them to have his Grace's company; the view was famous. This was a second invitation — one extended over the very head of his host, too; the Prorege had slipped a peg lower yet. But the Duke intimated that he was already pretty familiar with the *terra di Siena*, and it was quite impossible, really, for him to take the necessary time. The Prorege had now about reached the end of his string, and with a consciousness of an utter prostration of spirit he asked the Duke out and out a personal favor.

If it is necessary to offer here a word of apology for the Viceroy of Arcopia, let it be offered, since the course of this narrative will present few occasions of a similar kind; but he was immensely in earnest over his Perugino, and his request of Avon may not seem as humiliating to us as he himself felt it to be. He was meaning, he said, to visit the missals in the library of the cathedral in the morning, and he should be glad to do so under the conduct of so great a virtuoso as the Duke was known to be.

The Duke could ignore suggestions and decline invitations, but the asking of such a favor as this was a different matter. Then Avon, as an actual fact, knew more about missals than any other man in Tuscany, and he was not displeased to have his eminence

recognized, especially by another who was himself a connoisseur. Besides, what was three-quarters of an hour immediately after breakfast? He withdrew, promising compliance, and the Prorege, emerging from the stifling clouds of doubt, took a quick draught of the refreshing air of comparative certainty.

It was into this atmosphere that the Cavaliere and his friend presently entered, and they contributed their own quota of ozone by advising their apprehensive patron that the arrangements for their departure to San Gimignano were completed, and that they would leave Siena in the morning after a breakfast as early and hurried as even his impatient haste could exact. Then the Cavaliere put the Prorege into a flutter again by telling him that still another of his possible competitors was in Siena. The Prorege responded instantly to this slight touch; but the Cavaliere smiled quizzically and shrugged his shoulders and declared that this new candidate was not likely to give them any trouble: he had other matters to look after — matters much more interesting and important — to him.

The Prorege accepted this assurance without calling for corroborative detail, and presently returned home with the Marchese. On the way back he asked his host (for the visit to the Libreria was the merest stop-gap) if he knew of any persons in the town who had articles of virtu with which they might be induced to part; anybody,— it mattered not who or what,— friend, relative, or acquaintance, high or low, gentle or simple, that possessed tapestries with which they could dispense, or armor that they would offer

temporarily at a liberal figure to an immediate purchaser, or cranes and andirons which might be procured advantageously if applied for at once, or plaques and vases that might swell the collection of a great noble, provided no time were lost in making a suitable proposal. Were there any palaces where carved ceilings could be bargained for? Were there any convents where superfluous altar-cloths awaited purchasers — orthodox or heterodox? Were there no picture-galleries whose gentle but impoverished owners were contemplating dispersal? Were there no —

The Prorege was pausing under the projecting bracket of a dim street-lamp, his fingers interlocked in an imploring gesture, and the light flickering down upon his troubled face. His companion had halted, too, and was regarding the ravenous zeal of the viceroy with a frank amazement; he seemed to feel himself standing face to face with the spirit of Spoliation incarnate, that had descended to rob his native town of even such poor relics as time and misfortune had left her. But he was able, upon understanding the situation, to offer one or two suggestions and to give a bit of information or so that had some bearing on the matter in hand; and when the Prorege blew out his candle that night, he did so with the complacent air of a man who, in spite of the dark, saw two moves ahead.

No spot in all Italy is more consciously devoted to art than is the library of the Cathedral of Siena,— the Sala Piccolominea,— where architecture, painting, wood-carving, and missal-illuminating combine to produce a body and a flavor and a bouquet not often to be enjoyed in equal degree elsewhere; and

few apartments, perhaps, have been more unconscionably devoted to artifice than the same stately saloon, thanks to the web which the ingenious Prorege now began to spin there for his unsuspecting cicerone. Their inspection of the missals began with a high and formal gravity; the priest in attendance was all compliance, and the Duke handled each of the bulky volumes with the affectionate thoroughness that the Prorege had anticipated. He entered into a minute examination of the delicate miniatures that adorned each prodigious initial, comparing the work of Fra This in one book with the work of Fra That in another; and he showed that he possessed a more than merely artistic apprehension of the bands of squares and diamonds, red and black, that straggled across every page, for he occasionally stayed the turning of a leaf for the sake of a bit of chanting, which he performed gravely to the beating of his lead-pencil. His severe, smooth-shaven face, and his somewhat rough and raucous voice, helped almost to transfer him from the ranks of the laity to those of the *religiosi;* and the Prorege, whose insinuation of paintings and carvings and terra-cottas was just beginning, could not restrain a smile as the consciousness of his own Mephistophelian attitude grew upon him; a smile whose self-complacent relish was in exact ratio — as would have been the case with any of the rest of us — to his own innate goodness.

Half an hour now had passed in these diversions, and Pensieri-Vani was doubtless well beyond the city walls. The Prorege, standing close behind the Duke's left shoulder, had begun a mysterious whispering that

involved streets and numbers, and certain walls and doorways, and names and personalities, and distant hints of misfortune and impoverishment and unprecedented opportunities; and presently the Duke closed one of the big volumes by the absent-minded falling of a cover, and he did not open another one. In due time he had an eager look of interest in his face, a question or two on his tongue, and a note-book and pencil in his hand, and the Prorege soon concluded that his rival was likely to spend the remainder of the day in Siena — as indeed he did.

It seemed to the Prorege that by this little stroke of policy he had earned the right to some trifling diversion or other, and after a light lunch he found himself tripping it through the shrubs and flower-beds of the Lizza toward the *pallone* ground which lay beneath the fortifications of the Fortezza. He selected a lofty perch in the angle of a convenient bastion,— a position which commanded at once a good view of the grounds below him and of the old town itself sprawled out carelessly beneath and about him. On one of the huddled hills opposite rose the cathedral, with its dome and its bell-tower and its vast skeletonic nave; and on others appeared the façades of churches and the towers of convents, like knots in a loosely tangled skein. In the midst of all this the great tower of the Municipio shot up and blossomed forth, and encompassing all was a long, low heaving of brown and half-denuded hills, set here and there with time-worn monasteries and with villas reached through long avenues of cypresses.

Some twenty or thirty paces from the Prorege, half

a hundred or more spectators had established themselves on the big stone blocks of the parapet, and were intent on the game that was proceeding beneath them. There were several ladies dressed with the light gaiety appropriate to the season and the occasion, and there was, too, the indispensable number of frisky and venturesome little boys. These frolicked along the parapet, and while constantly on the point of falling their fifty feet, never quite did so; an unrepeated reality is very insipid, of course, as compared with a constantly reiterated apprehension. Below, in the court, the half-dozen players appeared in white linen blouses with frills all stiffly starched and ruffled after the fashion of gentlemen amateurs on a notable occasion, and they wielded manfully the great spiked wooden muffs, which are carried on the right fist and form the one weapon of offense and defense. One of them, catching sight of the Prorege, waved him a salutation half familiar, half deferential, and the Prorege, after a moment's blinking in the face of the sun, recognized in him a Pisan acquaintance whose play he had once applauded outside the Lucchese gate. Most of these young men were as short and dark as the traditions of their race exact, but one of them was a tall and slender blond whose strained eyes and tousled hair betrayed the anxiety of the novice before the gaze of some single and especial spectator, and whose erratic and extravagant play indicated more enthusiasm than skill. The single and especial spectator appeared to be a young lady of twenty or twenty-one, who wore a plain but handsome tailor-made suit, and whose cool gray eyes cast a quiet

and self-possessed look upon the struggle going on below.

When her champion made a successful stroke, she waved her handkerchief or her parasol; when he made an unsuccessful one, she looked at the tower of the cathedral or at the squad of recruits in gray linen who were drilling on the parade-ground behind her. Once, when by a stroke of exceptional vigor and address he sent the big ball bounding up against the face of the wall to within a foot of her own standpoint, she threw out her hands and started back with a kind of scream. The Prorege looked at her, for the scream was no ordinary scream; though impromptu, it was a finished vocal effort; it was a piece of free, fine, full tone-production. It was a scream that challenged a responsive chord from a big concourse of violins and clarinets and bassoons; and her gesture seemed to invite the other ladies to respond — as sopranos, mezzo-sopranos, and contraltos — with a "Gran Dio!" or an "Ah, fuggite!" of proper fire and shrillness. The Prorege continued his curious gaze — where, where had he seen her before? But the young lady seemed a bit ashamed of the attention she had attracted; she shifted her parasol to hide herself, and presently she strolled away.

In the course of the afternoon the Prorege intimated to his hostess that she could please him by asking the Duke of Avon and Severn to dine there that evening. The Duke presented himself dressed simply in the *négligé* of the tourist, yet full-armored in his amalgam of insularity and cosmopolitism. But he found himself outmatched by the monumental ig-

norance and self-complacency of the Marchesa, who, a Sienese of the Sienese, had never been twenty miles from home in her life, just as he found himself outdressed by the Prorege, who made the most careful toilet possible under the circumstances. On one point he was most particular: he wore a high-standing collar with rounded corners. Avon did not fail to notice this; he accepted the collar as a danger-signal, and he conducted himself with the necessary circumspection. Besides, his successful afternoon had put him in high good humor, and the Prorege listened with a grave smile to the account of his triumphal foray through the town. As regards the collar, however, there is room for other interpretations. The acute reader may see in it a token of anticipated victory. The sympathetic reader, conscious of the Prorege's ultimate failure, will rejoice that he did not put forth a token more obtrusive.

In the evening the Prorege and his friends walked forth in the Lizza. There was a scent of the blossoming springtime in the air, and a flickering of fireflies through the shrubbery. Rows of lights glimmered on the slant of distant hillsides, and church-towers soared up into the deep blueness punctured by the stars. A throng of idlers circled sedately over the gravel walks of the park, and a band, sent from the neighboring Fortezza, discreetly breathed at intervals old, old airs from the old, old operas. In one of the walks on the side nearest the *pallone* ground a couple were strolling slowly side by side, and the Prorege, flicking the ashes from the end of his cigar, paused to listen to the duet that they were performing *sotto voce*. A

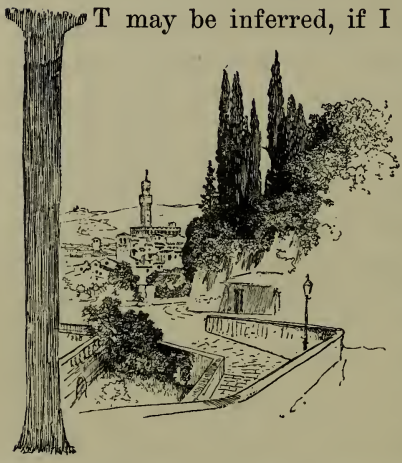
smooth soprano voice was softly repeating a phrase which the band had lately given out, and a rather rugged baritone appeared to be crudely casting about for the proper harmonies to accompany it. The soprano made no protest over his indifferent success; the intention was obviously far removed from anything like general esthetics.

The Prorege looked athwart the darkling *pallone* ground, and smiled a smile of plenary indulgence. To-night, far more easily than could have been the case on the night before, would he admit that Personal Propinquity and the Present might be entitled to a nearly equal consideration with Perugino and the Past. He little realized that his indebtedness to the *pallone* ground was fully as great as his indebtedness to the cathedral library, nor was his hour of pleasure spoiled by any apprehension that, despite the manœuvers in either quarter, his intriguing and his self-abasement were to prove equally in vain.

V

ORVIETO: HOW THE CAVALIERE WON HIS TITLE

IT may be inferred, if I have indicated with any degree of success how Pensieri-Vani moved about hither and thither with a very considerable degree of freedom and in the exercise of a will and fancy quite unhampered,— except by certain ignoble pecuniary considerations which I quite prefer to ignore,— that his domestic ties were of the slightest. In fact, it would be quite the truth to say that he had no domestic ties whatever; and now, approaching an age when a man comes to be distinctively termed a bachelor, the thought of matrimony was as far as ever from his mind. The image of himself as the head of a family filled him with a comic dismay. He valued his freedom above all things, and felt that he



could never assume the conjugal yoke without presently experiencing an irresistible disposition to cast it off. He sometimes thought he saw in the dim distance the coming of the day when the long-dominant and long taken-for-granted idea of Matrimony should go to meet, in the realm of the dispensable and the dismissed, the other idea, once equally dominant and equally taken for granted, of Monarchy. A bachelor himself, he willingly chose his associates from his kind; Hors-Concours, his chief intimate, shared his views on marriage, and enjoyed like him the life of pleasant and self-indulgent irresponsibility which may be led, up to a certain age, without provoking too severe a condemnation from the more serious and sober-minded section of society.

And as the Cavaliere had no family, so he had no home. He would have found it as difficult to give his allegiance to one town for aye as to give his hand to one woman for the same indefinite period. Though I have represented him as the occupant of an apartment in Pisa, he by no means looked upon that too placid town as suitable for a permanent residence; a month or so there, now and then, might be agreeable enough, but year in and year out, *in sæculâ sæculorum*, was quite a different affair. If the Cavaliere could be identified with any particular town, that town might be Florence, where he held a little *appartamento* on long time, and where most of the things collected from here and there during his long, irregular wanderings were kept in custody. At one time, when his journeyings marked out a larger orbit than now, he had found it convenient to make his

headquarters at Geneva, which he found to be not far from the geographical center of European travel; but for a few years past he had confined himself almost altogether to Italy, and the Florentines thus gained what the Genevese had lost.

It was usually well along in November when Pensieri-Vani threw open the window-blinds of his little *salotto* and sent out a general glance of complacent recognition over the river and the hills beyond; then, having given San Miniato and Bello Sguardo their due, he settled down to his annual inspection of his belongings and effects. These were numerous enough, in all conscience, but not, to the coldly critical eye of the connoisseur, of any extreme value. Their exposition would certainly have produced no stir at the Hôtel Drouot, or its Florentine equivalent; whatever value they possessed was based largely on personal considerations, and was perceptible chiefly to the owner himself. I shall not betray his hospitality by giving any detailed account of them; he did not buy Sodomas every day, and if I were to tell you of his shells from Amalfi, and his anemones from the Villa Doria, and his sketches from the Lagoons, and his bits of mosaic from Ravenna, you might only smile. Indeed, one noble personage, who had been admitted with more open-mindedness than the Cavaliere usually found it expedient to practise, declared that the fellow was as poor as a church mouse, and that the sum of his earthly belongings might easily be comprised in his title; he added a little jest as to the value of a title in Italy. Now the title really was the most prized of Pensieri-Vani's belongings, and the circumstances under which it was acquired justified, I think, the

possessor of it in his pride. But before I go on to tell you how and why it was conferred, let me correct any mistaken impression I may have conveyed concerning the worldly fortune of the most worthy gentleman in whose personality and peregrinations I have endeavored to awaken an interest. It is true that the little inventory of his possessions was quite guiltless of triptychs and tapestries, that he was without the slightest representative of Cellini's cunning skill, and that he longed in vain for a single piece of good, undoubted Capo di Monte. But we must count among his assets an unbounded susceptibility to those addresses and advances of Nature which should be our common heritage, however much most of us may slight and scorn her legacy, and an almost unbounded fund of artistic and historical knowledge which enabled *him* to see clearly where others saw through a glass darkly, or saw not at all, or quite failed, indeed, to realize that there was anything whatever *to* see. The ability to perceive, to understand what one perceives, to extract the full measure of profit and enjoyment by so understanding,— this must be in great part the wealth of a pilgrim in Italy. The Italian civilization addresses itself primarily to the eye, but after, with immense reaches of depth and breadth, to the intellect. If you prefer a civilization that shall address exclusively the "moral sense," I must refer you to New England, with its clapboard school-houses and its Cotton Mathers.

But how did the Cavaliere become a cavaliere? — that is the question. I will tell you without any further delay.

In the days when he was the ordinary "signor" of

the public's general address, but the pleasant "signorin'" of doting *sagrestani* and easy-going old apple-women, he chanced to pass a fortnight at Orvieto with a certain venerable canonico there, whose favorite he was. You readily recall the rock of Orvieto, with its sheer fall of six or eight hundred feet to the stony bed of the Paglia, and must assuredly know the old town, so solidly reared in square-wrought blocks of rich, dark-brown tufa, that perches upon the top of it. And if you have forgotten all else, your memory still holds some recollection of the great cathedral there, with its sumptuous front so galleried, so gabled, so grandly laden down with its superb array of sculptures and bronzes and vast sheeted spread of richly glittering mosaics. Well, the canonico being attached to the cathedral and the signorino to the canonico, the exact relation of the young man to the ancient edifice might easily be made a matter of mathematical exposition. But I may escape the frigidity of such a method by saying that Pensieri-Vani's attitude toward the church was, from the first, one of keen delight tempered by a reverent awe, and ended in becoming one of almost personal affection. As he resorted to it day after day, each time possessing its cool, dim, spacious aisles almost to himself, he felt impelled by a sense of absolute justice to pay his fullest tribute to a monument which received so little and yet deserved so much. And as few strangers presented themselves to be informed of its just dues, he resolved that such of the natives as he could reach should no longer go uninstructed. The canonico, toward whom he directed his

first efforts, and whom he induced, after considerable pleading, to accompany him in a little excursion along the narrow gallery that crosses the façade, did not make the ideal convert. His feeling toward the church came rather from a forty years' residence under its shadows than from any perception of its artistic excellencies; and his dim old eyes, as they caressed its front, expressed only a pleasure in the general permanence of its presence. Nor was Pensieri-Vani much more successful with the archbishop. This venerable prelate accepted his church just as if it were a great fact of nature, as much and as lastingly a part of the general scheme of things as the vast rock on which it stood — another rock, in fact, as high, as strong, as enduring, as mighty, as glorious. It was not until Pensieri-Vani encountered, one morning, on the steps of the church itself, a young Savoyard who was passing a few days at the Aquila, and with whom he was not slow in striking up an intimacy, that he found any one with whose views and feelings on this point his own seemed in exact accord. With this new acquaintance — the Seigneur des Hauts Rochers de Hors-Concours — he paid long and repeated visits to the great monument of the town. Then, too, they familiarized themselves with the town itself and with the valley plain at its foot. Not the least of their pleasures here was extended to them by that roadway which, rendered irregular by numerous small piazze and other open spaces, skirts the edge of the rock and almost circumscribes the town — an edge hung with any number of dilapidated old dwellings and half a dozen or more de-

crepit and superannuated churches. If the connecting link between the animal and the vegetable kingdoms be found in the sponge, which is variously considered a creature and a plant, then, in like manner, the connecting link between the vegetable and the mineral kingdoms might be found in the town of Orvieto, which, though reared in sturdy and indubitable stone, yet wears such an aspect of usefulness outlived, and offers such evidence of a long, slow lapse through the various stages of moldering decay, that one involuntarily recalls the appearance of a corn-field in November, or seems to scent the rich and rotted earth in the depths of some sun-shunned wood. What cypress grove could be more richly somber than the warm, brown walls of Orvieto's centuried habitations? What oak copse more sturdy and stable than the positive and ponderous round arches, big and little, that span almost every door and window throughout the town? What forest glade more cool, and quiet, and pensive, and deserted, more surely marked for a long career of slow, unheeded disintegration, than some of those dank and dusky little convent-churches whose moldering walls give back a hollow echo to the footfall of the passing stranger? For the connoisseur of the abandoned, the desolate, the Novemberesque, the gone-to-seed Orvieto has an interest quite its own.

In one of the old sanctuaries that totter on the edge of the cliff—the dampest and duskiest one, the most seemingly God-forsaken of them all—our sojourners chanced one day upon a real artistic treasure. On a rude old wall—a wall seamed, and scarred, and damp-

soaked—they found clinging, in a state of lamentable and disheartening neglect and decay, a few shreds and patches of ancient frescos. Most of these could hardly have been attractive at any time, and at this late day not many of them were even intelligible. But among them, and yet apart, looking out from a cloudy screen of characterless modern plaster as the moon looks through a break in the clouded heavens, was the face of a Madonna. It was a Madonna of the *tre-cento*, Tuscan utterly, and as Giottesque as the sweet asceticism of her thin and sharply drawn features could make her—a saint of sugar and vinegar. Her narrow eyes fastened upon them a look of dulcet severity, and her nimbused head drooped slightly, half in humility and half in pride. Was she gracious or was she unbending? Was she human or was she divine? They could not tell; but they felt that she was pure. And then they remembered, though it seems almost an indignity to pen the words, that, after all, this vision, reduced to its simplest and lowest elements, was but a trace or two of color upon a sheet of crumbling plaster. How could so little mean so much? How could this slight relic, which, in the course of the centuries, must have received the homage, and at such close quarters, too, of so many pilgrims (for surely the contemplation of this aid to prayer could not have been confined altogether to the sacristan), have maintained so long its sanctity intact? It was merely a bit of plaster a few inches square, and already half loosened from its hold; the building was dark and deserted; the sacristan was old, and feeble, and half blind—perhaps even venal. A few cuts with

a penknife would detach the picture altogether; a cunningly folded coat or mantle would serve to transfer it, undetected, from the edifice; the train for Florence would be passing in an hour—

But all this has nothing to do with Pensieri-Vani's title. He waited for a Madonna until he could obtain one without ignoring the Decalogue, and he earned his honorary prefix on the occasion of his officiating at the organ for high mass in the Orvieto cathedral. A great function was approaching, and the archbishop, who half divined that certain eminent personages from Rome would attend, desired to have the celebration as elaborate and impressive as possible. At this particularly important juncture his chief musician suddenly failed him, and there was no other person attached to the cathedral whom he could venture to trust on so momentous an occasion. Considering the peculiar circumstances of the case, the archbishop allowed himself to break through the time-honored ordinance which barred the laity from any prominent part in so great a function, and signified to the canonico, whose belief in Pensieri-Vani's powers was boundless, and whose expression of this belief was quite unrestrained, that if their secular brother desired to officiate upon the occasion, the archiepiscopal eye would look as indulgently as possible upon the innovation. But, that proper decorum might be preserved, the young man should assume the vestments befitting the office. Pensieri-Vani accepted the offer, vestments and all, took his place at the proper time, and almost played the archbishop off his very throne.

I am only too conscious that I may have failed to

prepare you for that particular trend of the Cavaliere's talent which I now desire you to follow; but if time and place and circumstance may form one's powers and bring them into play, the same considerations must readily be allowed the power to do so slight a thing as merely to qualify them. If you are seated at a humble little piano in a half-lighted *salotto*, with a few friends about you, your harmonies ripple lightly and gracefully along, with here and there just a touch of the pensive or the capricious; but when you find yourself in place under a vast and powerful organ in the populous and resounding cavern of a great cathedral, you summon all the pomp and strength and splendor of your art to your assistance. What is diviner than an organ? Where, more than on an organ-bench, as you sit improvising the concords commensurate with the splendors of a great Catholic function, does the whole being — physical, mental, and moral — come into free and perfect play? when your feet tread out the red wine of harmony, and your fingers drip with the rich juices of the keyboard's vintage, and your head swims and your heart beats high with the transporting ecstasy of the draught. I grant that there are not many who have it in their power to become thus enviously self-intoxicate; you and I, perhaps, if we lived for a hundred years and devoted our whole time and energy and talent to this end, might close our century with failure; but Pensieri-Vani was born with the gift,— you have it there. Moreover, things that day had worked together to raise him to an unusually exalted frame of mind. If you, now, had spent an hour previously

in that chapel of the cathedral which houses the tremendous frescos of Signorelli,— if you had mounted to the darkling organ-loft during the first low mutterings of an impending thunder-storm,— if you had possessed the same consciousness of being backed up, as it were, with a great array of banners, and censers, and crucifixes, and mitered prelates, and long-drawn procession of white-robed acolytes, and all the other pictorially significant accessories to a historical and spectacular Mother Church,— if you had known of the presence, somewhere among the throng of wondering and impressionable peasant-folk, of certain great figures from the capital — among them a bevy of Roman princesses — who might be counted upon to appreciate your technic and imaginative power when the flock of Umbrian *contadini* could but tremble in mere wonder and amaze, and to convey a vivid impression of your genius far beyond the narrow walls of Orvieto,— then you, too, might have perhaps entered upon the same high-strung, all-impelling mood in which my hero drew his first stops and evoked his first low, rolling, rumbling tones from the expectant instrument.

He felt like Phaeton, gathering up the reins of harmony preparatory to a long chromatic flight among the constellations spangling the firmament of sound; like Samson, collecting his forces to grasp the great columns towering above his head and to shake the mighty instrument to its foundations; like Gabriel, inflating his celestial physiognomy to rouse the dead-and-alive dwellers on the Umbrian hillsides by the trumpet-blast of inspired melody. He felt capable of

anything, everything,— confident of the inexhaustibility of his imagination when put into motion by a worthy theme, and of the entire adequacy of his practised hand to heap the measure of his self-expression to the full. His precise theme I cannot positively state. I ventured to question him on this point some time after, when rumors of his great performance had begun to spread abroad, but his answer was very evasive, and I never learned that he gave any one else any more satisfaction than he did me. I only know that to one hearer he suggested Angelo's "Last Judgment"; to another, Dante's "Inferno"; Hors-Concours reverted at once to Signorelli's "Resurrection" in the church itself; and a German painter on his way to Rome could think of nothing but Kaulbach's "Destruction of Jerusalem." All discriminating and trustworthy reports made his improvisation one wild mingled torrent of weird, awesome, and appalling effects,— a vast fantasia of thunders and lightnings, of tumult and terror, of shrieks and curses and condemnations, of tramplings and trumpet-calls, and prayers and imprecations and vengeance not to be stayed. I cannot phrase it; nor could he.

Inspiration, like ambition, grows by feeding on itself. It is a stairway that ascends by a sort of geometrical progression,— each step higher and more daring than the last. Pensieri-Vani, with each modulation, each progression of chords, each masterful combination of stops, almost with each tremulous pulsation of the reeds, grew more eager, more confident, more venturesome, until the intoxicating moment came when he may be said to have left the

topmost step of his stairway and to have launched out upon the very air itself. In a certain marked moment he surprised himself with a chord so novel, so ravishing, so complicated, so utterly unexpected, so unknown to his past experience, and so unattainable (as it turned out) to his future, so quickly and completely and unmistakably responded to by his thrilled and spell-bound auditory, that he felt urged on to a higher and bolder flight than any he had even heretofore attempted. But alackaday! Just at the moment of his most flamboyant ecstasy, when his brain whirled wildly and his heart beat with thick-coming pulses of pure exultation, and his hands, entangled in a maze of couplings and mixtures, cried appealingly for mercy and forgiveness, while his feet rumbled forth inexorably the dread judgment of damnation and desolation — just when the elder of the princesses was murmuring between her set teeth, "He must not, shall not, move me," and the archbishop, half supported by his massive crozier, was seen to rise startled from his seat, and the group of withered old peasant women who were huddled like frightened sheep before the altar-rail began to moan and cry out for very fear and terror — just when Pensieri-Vani himself, involved in an avalanche, a hurricane of sound, was beginning to wonder in what manner he might hope to descend from the height to which he had so audaciously risen, and the trembling of his hand in the ingenious and complicated piece of suspended harmony upon which he was dwelling brought up before him with a shock the fate of Lucifer, son of the morning — just then, I say, the instrument, with a mighty and convulsive shudder, became inar-

ticulate; a strange, vast, sudden silence filled the church; the organ, exhausted, humbled, silenced, confessed itself unequal to the task imposed upon it. Phaeton was checked suddenly in his reckless course; the trumpet was snatched away in a twinkling from the archangel's lips; the pillars of the temple of music at once regained their equilibrium; and our musician, somewhat dazed and dizzy, but even more thankful than dismayed, climbed down from his lofty post, while his audience abandoned itself to the feelings evoked by so stormy an address and so unique a peroration. Pensieri-Vani, feeling not unlike the daring Alpine climber who falls his thousand feet and drops into a merciful snow-drift, or the wrecked aëronaut who stands indebted for his life to some opportune tree-top, hardly felt sure whether he had succeeded or failed; but he congratulated himself that his audience, at least, had been almost ideal. It was his way to bite off the two ends of society and to throw the middle part away, and here he had had the extremes of the social scale: on the one hand the simple, unsophisticated, uncontaminated peasantry, with hearts to be moved and stirred; and on the other hand some representation from the urbane, cultivated circles of the *cognoscenti*, possessed of trained perceptions and equipped with the ability to formulate their impression of his powers. The ladies from Rome, in particular,— he met them next day,— were very felicitous in their recognition of the altogether exceptional nature of the occasion, and in the end placed him more in their debt than he could have believed possible. The daughters of a princely house, they exercised a very appreciable influence in the artistic circles of

the Eternal City, and they roundly declared that Pensieri-Vani should soon have an opportunity to play before an audience vastly different from that which had gathered within the cathedral of Orvieto. They hinted at great things, and Pensieri-Vani, who knew his own deserts and fully understood the curious position that the Altissimi held between the Vatican and the Quirinale, was for a time in a state of delicious doubt as to whether his next endeavor should be before Majesty or Sanctity. Their uncle, the archbishop, seemed to point his index-finger straight toward the Leonine City; but their mother, as lady of honor at court, sat with her face turned toward Monte Cavallo. Majesty carried the day, and Pensieri-Vani was summoned before the Queen.

Civilization is many-sided, but of all its facets none is more glittering than the one which may be called the power of formulation. We may appreciate genius; we may even give to our appreciation a casual and informal expression; but until we can formulate this expression and give its object an authoritative and widely accepted stamp we are far from an ideal polish and brilliancy. This grace the Latin civilization can claim; if one is a notable, the world may be so informed — one's notability is officialized. Pensieri-Vani was a notable; and a society which has at its bestowal such an amplitude of honor that even the meritorious alien may be cloaked by its generous folds dubbed him so. *This* is how the Cavaliere became a cavaliere, and I am really ashamed to have spent so much time over so simple a matter.

VI

ROME: THE MARGRAVINE AND THE IRON POT

BETWEEN Pensieri-Vani's visit to Rome for the purpose indicated in my last paragraphs and his next visit to the same city, an interval of five or six years occurred. To the novice in Italian travel it may seem strange, almost impossible, and perilously near to the discreditable, to pass half a dozen years between Sicily and the Alps, and in all that time never to set foot in La Santa; but the Cavaliere knew the Seven Hills by heart, and besides, when we think of it, only a very small part of Italy is inclosed by the Aurelian Wall. Italy is such an inexhaustible treasure-house, indeed, that his six years might have

grown easily enough to twelve, had not a matter of grave import called him at a certain juncture from the Arno to the Tiber. This was an affair that shook the whole peninsula, and at one time threatened the most serious international complications; even at this late date there are those in Florence and Dresden, Berlin and Rome, who retain the most vivid recollection of an extremely exceptional affair, and who are pleased and flattered in no surer way than by a request to recite — for the hundredth time, perhaps — the tale of the Margravine and the Iron Pot.

It may be that some of you have resented my disposition to assume your familiarity with the obscure and inaccessible relics of mid-Etruria, and perhaps I was wrong in expecting even a remote acquaintance with matters so difficult and recondite. I hope I shall not repeat the error if I take for granted a certain familiarity with the outlying hills of Rome, which, however much indeed neglected, are sufficiently interesting and sufficiently accessible to receive the amount of attention that is justly their due. When you have made your pilgrimage over these slighted and deserted tracts, so frequently ignored by the too hurried gleaner, you have gathered in such a harvest of recollections as will render the very name of Rome a delight to you long after the thoughts of the greater roba di Roma have merged themselves into a mass of indistinct memories — recollections of long strolls through solitary lanes, among whose withered hedgerows the quick lizard writhes; of unlawful trespassings on quiet gardens and cloisters, enriched with sculptured wells and overshadowed with palm or pine; of

entrance into some ancient, unchurched church, with its half-forgotten treasure of carved altar and mosaic pavement, where frescoed saints and angels crumble slowly from the damp walls, and where the grim old mosaics of the apse bend down upon you and gloomily return your stare; of tutelary saints, whose acquaintance you then made, and whose legends you then heard for the first time; of monkish ciceroni, who hardly take the trouble to conceal their incredulity as they recite their time-honored untruths, yet slyly wonder if the inquisitive stranger will be considerate enough to disguise his own; of weak and withered old men who open up their obscure haunts to the infrequent visitor and timidly direct his attention to poor little collections of antiquities — scraps of marble or fragments of sculpture dug from the neighboring vineyard or picked up by their own doorsteps. But the Cœlio, the Esquiline, the Aventine are marked above all else by the little churches, obscure and desolate, that crown their tops or crouch in the gardens on their sides. And of all these the most satisfactorily obscure and desolate and remote is perhaps that of San Sabio. I may say, just here, for the benefit of the over-exact, that there is no church in Rome or near Rome called San Sabio — that San Sabio is merely an assumed name. For why should I tack its real appellation to this spot when no good end would be served by doing so? Why should I prompt the enthusiastic tourist to make a long and weary pilgrimage over the remote Aventine to confront him in the end with a barred and bolted gate and to aggravate him by the absence

of a *custóde* who at best is but illusory and intermittent? The vexed and disappointed visitor may, it is true, see above the tall, flower-fringed old wall the arched windows of the bell-tower and the darkling little loggia of the arcaded façade. But what can a mere outside view tell him of the dusky interior, where the seamed and crackled floor lies a lovely pool of breeze-stirred opus alexandrinum, into which shreds of crumbling frescos fall drop by drop from the stained and damp-oozing walls; or of the old garden without, where the orange-trees droop heavily with their burnished fruit and the vines lend themselves twiningly to the inclosing of long arbored walks? To know San Sabio you must pass the gate, and passing the gate comes by favor and happy chance if it ever comes at all. For the precincts of San Sabio never open but on those occasional days when the red-gowned students of the Collegium Germanicum come hither to spend a holiday, to pray forgiveness for imaginary sins, to pace the orange-walks in meditative fancy, to refresh themselves around the tables of the old monastic refectory, to indulge in a worldly little game of bowls, to sing massive chorals with a magnificent blending of tenors and basses and all the deep fervor of German devotion. For San Sabio is wholly given over to Teutonia — no less so than the German Embassy on the Capitoline; nor does the garden of San Sabio seem less completely under the ægis of Germania than is the garden of the Palazzo Caffarelli itself. And so, one day, when the garden of San Sabio witnessed the great discovery of the Iron Pot, it is not to be wondered that the stu-

dents who unearthed this valuable relic should have at once conveyed it to the Istituto Archæologico Tedesco on the Capitol, where it might rest in safety and quiet until its ultimate ownership and final disposal should be arranged.

It must be confessed that at first view there was very little about the Iron Pot to arouse that interest which subsequently mounted to such an intense and poignant pitch. It was merely a utensil of ordinary appearance, ten or twelve inches across, with three little rudimentary legs to keep it right side up; and it had a handle. But beyond such customary and to-be-expected marks as a long interment would naturally confer upon it, no distinguishing characteristics could be discerned — no earmarks of style, no indications of era. Conjecture had not a single peg to hang a guess upon; or, on the other hand, it had a clear and unimpeded field for most unbridled, unbounded speculation, whichever it pleased. The latter alternative of course was chosen, and the attempt to make something from nothing went briskly on. The Iron Pot was subjected to all the tests that experience and ingenuity could contrive — microscopical, chemical; even spectrum analysis was at one time suggested, and the light of other days, whose halo surrounded it, narrowly escaped dissipation through the ingenuities of modern science. The *spirituel* Jones-Browne, whose poetical interpretations of North Italian gothic have had such an extended vogue, and have placed him before the public as the most accomplished medievalist of the day, relegated it to the period of the sojourn at Avignon, and an ardent young disciple of

his penned a glowing sonnet upon it in which he shed over its quaint and homely form a tragic luster derived from the Orsini, and the Colonnesi, and the last of the Tribunes. But the Roman city, to which five hundred years are a mere yesterday, laughed this view to scorn. The erudite *avvocato*,[1] De Profundis, whose leaning was, in general, distinctly toward the early empire, saw in its robust bulge and determined squat the vigorous genius of the Augustan Age; and he offered an elaborately restored view of the Roman Forum as it appeared in the earlier days of Tiberius, with the Iron Pot, restored to its rightful pedestal, wafting a cloud of incense through the midst of that vastly storied inclosure. But the eminent and estimable Gregorianius, of Göttingen, felt justified in claiming a higher antiquity and a more transcendent interest for the Iron Pot than any of his fellow-savants had ventured upon. The very exceptional manner in which the legs were joined, and a remarkable indentation on one side which showed up through the incrusted rust only after the most minute and painstaking inspection, convinced him beyond all doubt of the correctness of the position he straightway took. The weird and mysterious angle at which the legs stuck out from the body of the pot, and the absolute identity between the mark on its side and a certain character graven on the face of one of the rock-hewn tombs at Toscanella, relegated this transcendent *oggetto* back to the dim days of the Etruscan League and offered proof positive—for was not the pot found within a stone's-throw of the Servian wall?—of the existence

[1] *Avvocato:* an Italian gentleman who studies law to practise archæology.

of an Etruscan settlement twenty-five hundred years ago upon the Aventine Hill. But it were impossible to give space to all the theories and opinions held regarding this great "find," while a hundredth part of the erudition displayed in setting its status would swamp my little account completely. Suffice it to say that the Iron Pot was the theme of the hour. Everybody went to see it, everybody talked about it, everybody had an opinion about its origin and age, everybody disagreed with everybody else, and the discussion, becoming more contentious and cantankerous every day, soon transformed one of the most urbane towns in Europe into an unendurable nest of wranglers.

But the trouble as to the mere nature of the Iron Pot was as nothing compared with the trouble that was precipitated when the matter of ownership came to be decided. If it could have been awarded to the individual who unearthed it; if it could have been considered the property of the proprietor of the land on which it had been discovered; if it could have been put up and raffled off at a public *tombola;* if it could at once have been annihilated and become as a thing that was not, these present lines had never blotted paper. But what particular individual discovered it? were not a dozen or more concerned in the great achievement? What particular person could be said to control the ground with all the hereditaments and appurtenances thereunto belonging? were not the precincts of San Sabio church ground that was held merely by the sufferance of a usurping government and was now at the disposal of a community

of foreigners? Then, as for a *tombola*, such a suggestion was an insult to the dignity of this venerable utensil; and as for Nirvana, the precious actuality of the Iron Pot could not, *grazie a Dio*, be so lightly done away with.

The first step actually taken to settle the ownership and possession of the Iron Pot may readily be surmised by those familiar (as most of us no doubt are) with the Italian law. The Minister of Fine Arts and Belles Lettres sent a brief but courteous note to the Archæological people apprising them that the discovery of the Iron Pot had come to his knowledge, and reminding them that, as all antiquities and art treasures unearthed or brought to light were regarded as the right and property of the general Government, their proper course — somewhat strayed from, perhaps, in the excitement of the moment — would be to remit the Iron Pot to the Curator of the Museo Capitolino, who would see it properly rehabilitated and displayed for the regard of an appreciative public. To this the Archæologist-in-Chief, who had no doubt anticipated this request and in some measure prepared for it, responded in a letter writhing with all sorts of polished Teutonic convolutions and written in a baffling, eye-taxing Teutonic hand. He seemed to refer the Ministry of the Fine Arts to the German Ambassador, and wrote plainly enough as a German first and an archæologist afterward.

The Minister of Fine Arts, who was an easy-going old gentleman with a certain dislike for affairs, and who saw on what lines the struggle for the Iron Pot was likely to be carried out, and who thought, more-

over, that he had done about all that could be expected of him, took the hint and put the matter in the hands of the Count Imbroglio, the Minister of Foreign Complications. Consequently, a week or two later—for great affairs move slowly, no less than great bodies—the German Embassy received a communication couched in the suave and circuitous French of diplomacy, restating the case and reiterating the request. And when, after another little delay, the Baron Joch von Hoch forwarded an autograph reply—for so important a matter as this threatened to become could hardly be left to a mere attaché—the controversy was fairly opened with both sides fully committed and with the whole town, native and foreign,—especially foreign, for the affair came as a perfect godsend to the leisured Anglo-Saxon colony,—divided into two hostile camps. It need not be supposed, however, that all the Germans were on the German side, or all the Italians on the Government side; for Italy, as everybody knows, swarms with *forestieri* more intensely Italian than the Italians themselves, and on the other hand the native population contains a powerful minority to whom the powers that be are not by any means the powers that ought to be. So when the rumor spread abroad that a certain great personage associated in some high official capacity with the Vatican itself was about to take advantage of the situation to claim the Iron Pot, on very plausible grounds, as the property of Holy Church, it began to look as if the contest were to be a three-cornered one, after all, and as if the horror of civil strife were to be added to the agony of foreign war.

For the letter of the Baron Joch von Hoch, though it said nothing distinctly except that in a matter of such transcendent importance he could scarcely venture to act upon his own responsibility, but would lay the matter before his chief at Berlin, seemed to intimate, through its fine-spun web of vague and circuitous and ambiguous phraseology, that it would be the part of wisdom to let sleeping dogs lie, or, if they must be roused, to at least minimize their yelpings; and a second epistle from him, replying in set terms to Imbroglio's reiteration of the point of government jurisdiction, denied any such jurisdiction, and maintained that the Collegium Germanicum and all pertaining to it must be considered as inviolate as the bounds of the German Embassy itself. Imbroglio replied that, in such a matter as this, the German Embassy was no more exempt than any other quarter would be: had the Iron Pot been unearthed in the garden of the Palazzo Caffarelli itself instead of in the garden of San Sabio, his point would still have been the same. The correspondence went on, of course, to a much greater length than I can follow, and became, as may be supposed, more involved, more mystifying, more laden with courteous superfluities with every paragraph,— until a final communication from Von Hoch seemed to remotely convey the portentous threat that unless the matter were speedily adjusted the great Prince Drei-Haare might be expected to issue from his Northern fastness and spread dismay and desolation throughout the whole Peninsula.

The effect of this upon the country I prefer not to

describe. Suffice it to say that "un meeting" was called to assemble in the Piazza Navona, that the Iron Pot was made the order of the day at Monte Citorio, that a deputation from the provinces came up to Rome to demand a firm stand for their native rights and dignity, and that an appeal went from the Quirinale to the Vatican that the papal claim be withdrawn for the sake of the honor and glory of Italy, which demanded that the Iron Pot remain on its own proper side of the Alps. The Vatican, although it could not promise its active support, agreed to at least withdraw from its antagonistic attitude, and the nation breathed free. The Iron Pot was still within the borders of Italy,—United Italy,—and the prospect of its remaining there seemed to brighten; while the Teutonic party apparently began to lose heart.

Then it was that the Margravine of Schwahlbach-Schreckenstein, putting on her famous false front and assuming her well-known expression of grim determination, set out for Rome. The drooping cause of the Fatherland was to be sustained, and the Margravine, as every one felt, was eminently calculated for the undertaking.

The Margravine of Schwahlbach-Schreckenstein was an immensely determined old woman, and a very wicked old woman, too, if the truth were to be told. The recital of her eccentricities at Baden Baden and of her exactions and tyrannies at Schwahlbach itself —she was finally invited to leave the country for its general advantage, and did—would make quite a chapter of itself; but I cannot enter into the subject: we are now considering the Margravine purely as an

artistic figure, and the line between art and morals, as the most advanced of us know, cannot be too rigorously maintained. Suffice it to say that the Margravine had a will of her own, and exercised it; and the Roman city felt, when she landed at the Stazione Centrale, that the matter might now very soon be expected to come to a head.

All this time, of course, the original question — that of the character of the Iron Pot — was not lost sight of. The two controversies went on side by side, and when the public grew a little more weary of the one question than of the other, it changed off; just as a sentry on duty shifts his weight from one leg to the other. At one time, when the nature of the Iron Pot seemed of more moment than its ownership, one of the Ministry sent, in a semi-official way, for Pensieri-Vani, who was at Florence, to come to Rome to pass a final word upon the claims put forward by the advanced Etruscan wing. The Cavaliere, who studiously avoided controversy and had an utter abhorrence of all legal processes, had no desire whatever to enter into the thickening fray, but he had a friend or two in the cabinet, and entertained very decided sympathies, of course, for the Italian side, so he allowed himself to be conducted to the Palazzo Pagetto by Imbroglio *incognito*, where the Iron Pot was in custody of the British Embassy pending a decision, and took a private view of the much-controverted utensil. He straightway declared his opinion that the Iron Pot was a relic of the Garibaldian Era, and might date back perhaps to the middle of the nineteenth century. He confidently recommended its prompt surren-

der to the Teutonic contingent; and the Ministry, who feared much less the clamor of the *popolo romano* than the ridicule of the polite world, immediately resolved upon a course of action. So when the Margravine, in full battle array, presented herself at the Ministry of Foreign Complications, which she did promptly the day after her arrival, she was met with a courtesy and suavity, a mild-spoken deference, which completely nonplussed and disarmed her. The smiling Imbroglio assured her that in consideration of her intercession his Government, swayed by her manifold estimable traits as a woman and a ruler, and her wide and favorable reputation as a patron of the Fine Arts, had decided to withdraw its claim and submit to have the Iron Pot once more rehoused in the Archæological Institute, to remain at the disposal of the illustrious race which she herself so honored and adorned; and the Margravine, only half pleased,— for she really panted for the fray,— smoothed down her ruffled feathers and withdrew.

Now, Pensieri-Vani's judgment on the Iron Pot, though privately given, soon became noised abroad, and the clamor of contending voices again filled the town. Having taken his position, he was now compelled, whether or no, to maintain it; and he did maintain it, bolstering it up with a long array of pros and cons and whys and wherefores. But he made very few converts; only an extremely small minority accepted his dictum. Almost everybody maintained an inviolate confidence in the genuineness of the Iron Pot; all orders rallied to the support of the popular idol; the age of Faith seemed to have again returned.

Most rock-rooted of all was the belief of the German Embassy; they were compelled to believe to save their own credit and dignity. But even more adamantine yet was the belief of the Margravine of Schwahlbach-Schreckenstein, whose energetic mind was now engaged in fabricating around the Iron Pot the most enormous and astounding fictions that could possibly be conceived of. So Pensieri-Vani left them to their own devices, and after a quiet little excursion to the Vigna San Sabio he returned to his quarters in Florence.

The Iron Pot then rested at last within the German lines, and the Baron Joch von Hoch shortly announced the series of festivities which would attend its departure from Rome for Berlin, where it would be placed in the Königliche-und-Kaiserliche Museum and vie with the great Kaulbachs themselves in interest and splendor. This intelligence filled the Margravine with anger and dismay; for be it known that she had come to Rome to possess the Iron Pot for herself, and she had, moreover, a better claim upon it than had yet occurred to anybody to suspect. If the pot had gone to the Italians it would have been the property of the Italian Government, but as long as it was to go, after all, to the Germans, it should be the property of the person who unearthed it. That was the law and the gospel. Who, then, had discovered it? Her own grandson. Was not this youth a member of the Collegium Germanicum? (Indeed he was, preparing for a Rhine archbishopric; for in this way the Margravine hoped to strike a balance with an offended Heaven.) Was he not

present in the Vigna of San Sabio on that eventful Thursday afternoon? Had not he been included in the group which had made the great discovery? Had it not been his hand that had, not indeed actually wielded the spade, but had dragged forth the Iron Pot by its handle, and held it up triumphantly to the light of day? Yes, a thousand times yes! Here was her claim, and she would make it good. She spoke, and the whole town trembled.

But she did nothing precipitately; she knew Von Hoch of old, and felt that a strong momentum would serve her better in the end than a high rate of speed. Besides, Joch von Hoch — though no one could question his bravery — was temporarily out of town, and she had no desire to treat with any one other than the head and front of the Embassy himself. In the mean while she strengthened her position at law and arranged, furthermore, to bring to bear all that social pressure which sometimes succeeds when everything else fails. She entered upon an imposing series of *conversazioni* — she was much too parsimonious to undertake balls or dinners — and drew her guests from the various circles of the city, literary, artistic, official, diplomatic, native, stranger — permanent and "passing through." In collecting this circle she set aside some of her most cherished animosities: her very first evening was attended by the granddaughter of the Minister of Pomps and Vanities — a pert young minx whom she cordially detested, but who, as the betrothed of Von Hoch's grandnephew, might well be put to some use. Her idea was to unite all the opposing factions, even the German one, against the

obdurate occupant of the Palazzo Caffarelli. Talk was cheap, and she encouraged them to talk. She also talked a good deal herself. The subject of all this talk I need not explain; but the Margravine's own contribution to it at the first of her reunions was notable enough for very particular mention. She announced, here, her own theory of the origin, nature, history, and adventures of the Iron Pot. She had given the matter careful and endless thought, she had held it up in this light and that, and now she knew her mind. In the robust and sturdy outlines of the Iron Pot, and in the tender mysticism of its transcendental handle, she saw the mark of a national genius quite at variance with that of Rome, of Etruria, of medieval Italy, the mark of the glorious and mighty German race; and the Iron Pot, in her estimation, was a miraculously conserved example of sturdy and primitive German art. Nay, more; it was also a mighty and enduring monument of ancient German history. In her mind's eye she saw the rapacious legions of Cæsar snatching the precious vessel from the rude altar of Germania's ancestral gods reared in the forests of the fir-fringed Oder. She saw it borne in triumph before Germanicus through the trophied Via Sacra, while the dishonored but unbending Thusnelda stalked proudly behind his chariot-wheels; and she called loudly upon her compatriots present — they were more numerous and more enthusiastic than she had dared to hope — to rally to her support and restore to her this precious relic of her heroic ancestress. In fact the Margravine went quite beyond herself and carried her hearers with her; and it was pretty

definitely decided that before such vehemence, such eloquence, such volubility, such determination, the obstinate Baron must soon succumb.

Within a week or two he was given an opportunity to do so. The Margravine sent to him an envoy bearing a statement of her case and a somewhat peremptory demand for the restitution of her property. She received a response of curt and prompt refusal.

Then the Margravine set her teeth and pulled herself together for one great, final effort. She put on a new front — a front so palpably false that, compared with this, her last had been the tritest verity, the most rock-rooted certitude — a front as hideous and awe-impelling as the traditionary chevelure of Medusa herself; and her wrinkled old face took on an expression of such fell and inflexible determination that, by comparison, the look she had carried to the Foreign Ministry had been but one of mere wavering imbecility. Then she ordered out her equipage of state, with the well-known Schwahlbach liveries of scarlet and saffron, and decreed an advance upon the Capitol. As the chariot rumbled through the Corso, shopkeepers and pedestrians alike paid the tribute of a curiosity which ranged all the way from awe to vague alarm; as it wound slowly up the broad roadway which doubles on the Capitoline slopes, the she-wolf caged in the adjacent shrubberies gave forth an ominous howl; and as the Margravine, having dismounted, began to hobble up the great *scalone* of the Palazzo Caffarelli, the attachés, with a precision and a unanimity proper to the most philosophical and most military of modern peoples, displayed an instant

desire to devote themselves to pressing concerns in remote parts of the edifice. That very afternoon a slight shock of earthquake was felt at Terracina, a hundred and fifty miles away; though this, of course, must be regarded merely as one of those singular coincidences that are constantly taking place.

The interview between the Margravine and the Baron Joch von Hoch took place with closed doors, and but faint echoes of it reached the outside world. One person only witnessed any part of it, and though he never afterward alluded to it except in the most guarded terms, it is easy to imagine what it must have been. It was epic, heroic, Wagnerian,— an Iliad, a Sinfonia Eroica, Siegfried and Brünhilde in mortal combat,— a battle-hymn full of clash and clangor, of over-wrought crescendos, of braying trumpets and sounding cymbals, with "tutti" marked over every bar, and "fortissimo" set against every staff. It had lasted half an hour, and was apparently approaching a climax beyond which a full orchestra doubly augmented for the occasion could scarcely be expected to go, when the sole auditor and eye-witness entered for a brief moment upon the scene. This was a timid young clerk, who bore to the Baron a brief communication that had come all the way from the Via Venti Settembre,— a note from the Minister of Finance, in fact. The effect produced by this missive was almost magical. The turbulence of the period of Storm-and-Stress gradually trailed away through the long reaches of a soothing diminuendo, and when the reception-chamber oped its ponderous and marble jaw the Margravine stalked forth triumphant. The

Iron Pot was at last her own. The German nation renounced forever any claim upon this precious vessel, and made but one condition: the trophy was to remain always within the boundaries of the Deutsches Reich and to be open always to the view of the Deutsches Volk. The Margravine willingly enough assented to this,—and in writing,—and returned home, having added another triumph to the trebly hundred of which the poet sings.

Her own part of the agreement she immediately prepared to execute, and the day was set which should see the Iron Pot carried back again across the Alps, when there reached her from the Finance Office a communication that quite dumfounded her. The chief commissioner of the Department of External Revenue inclosed a polite note, calling her attention to the law governing the duties on the export of works of art, objects of virtu, etc., and naming the figure at which the Iron Pot had been valued by a committee of experts. The figure was enormous, and the Margravine was fairly stunned. One tenth of the duty levied upon the Iron Pot would suffice to purchase a thousand thousand of the ordinary iron pots of commerce, and the Margravine found herself set squarely between defeat on the one hand and bankruptcy on the other and obliged to choose. The genuineness of the Iron Pot she could not dispute; she believed in it devoutly. She could not bring up against the Ministry Pensieri-Vani's verdict; his opinion had been quite unofficial, and nobody had accepted it, anyway,—least of all the Margravine herself, who could joyfully have torn this dissentient young man limb

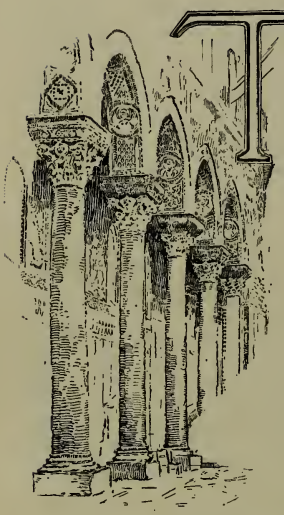
from limb. And the export law was adamant. The Margravine chose. Is it necessary to say how she chose? Financial ruin was bad, no doubt; but to have a sweeping victory turned at the last moment into a rout was worse. She put herself into immediate communication with Amsterdam and Frankfort, and, a week or two later, accompanied by the Iron Pot, but otherwise utterly stripped and impoverished, she passed through Innsbruck on her way north. She had either sold or mortgaged all her earthly possessions, but she preserved a bold front to the end, and left behind her in Italy an immense reputation for vigor, prowess, and pure nerve — stern old monolith that she was.

The Iron Pot, then, was hers at last — hers, and hers alone; yet that it could not long remain hers she but too clearly saw. She knew that the honor and glory of bringing it back to Germany was all that she could in the end receive as her due, and that she must appeal to the patriotism of the Fatherland to take this white elephant off her hands. She accordingly announced that she was open to negotiations for the purchase of the Iron Pot; but the competitors for the sacred relic were neither as numerous nor as august as she had hoped for. In the end it went to a second cousin of hers, the Gross-Herzog of Schreckenstein-Putz (who considered himself quite a figure in the art world), at a price which the Margravine regarded as distinctly paltry — hardly more than double the amount of the export-duties. The Iron Pot is now in the grand-ducal collection at Putz, where it sometimes attracts the wondering attention

of occasional visitors. Pensieri-Vani himself saw it there a few years ago. He smiled quietly to himself, but said not a word, though he, as far as I am aware, is the only being in the world who knows all that *might* be said.

VII

THE VALLEY OF THE PO: MASTER AND PUPIL



THE Prorege of Arcopia had not been by any means uninterested in the controversy whose chief points I have endeavored to set down, and would in all probability have himself come to Rome to take part in it but for one or two considerations that seemed to render such a step somewhat awkward and difficult. In the first place, he had sedulously avoided the capital, since accepting the position he at present enjoyed, feeling that a close vicinity to the power from which he held authority might place him in a position requiring considerable dexterity to be maintained with anything like grace; and in the second place, he had very particular reason for feeling — and keenly feeling — that his duty toward the Arcopians should take precedence of any other concern. For on his return to Ar-

copia from his self-imposed exile he had met a reception so warm, so cordial, so enthusiastic that he could only dumbly wonder how he had ever found it in him to turn the cold shoulder on such a loyal and devoted people. As he passed through the streets of the capital, amidst a whirlwind of flying banners and a great chorused shout of welcome from ten thousand throats, remorse tugged at his heartstrings, and contrition seemed almost welling from his eyes. And when the triumphal procession reached the Piazza Grande, and he looked about and saw in what manner the Arcopians had availed themselves of his absence to make a very tangible and explicit expression of their feelings for him, he was constrained to turn away his face and chokingly declare himself the most heartless and ungrateful of rulers. For there, before his very eyes, stood the viceregal palace, splendid in the new façade whose projection some months before had been at the bottom of that pitiable misunderstanding and estrangement,—but a façade much more brilliant and stately and complete than he would have ever dared ask: the twenty polished columns reared themselves grandly in one long, unbroken line, the mosaicked borders and devices glittered bravely in the sun, and the broad frieze bore a long dedication (in much abbreviated but most heart-warming Latin) to the "noblest and best-beloved of princes." The Prorege was completely overcome, and in making his formal, public acknowledgment of this great and surprising kindness he roundly declared that nothing in his whole life had pleased or touched him more — that the fulfilment of none of his most ardent and long-cherished

desires could have given him a greater happiness than this spontaneous and freely made offering. This declaration of the Prorege's contained depths of meaning that the unillumined outsider could scarcely be expected to fathom; for it was well known in certain circles that his most intense desire was for an heroic statue to be erected during his lifetime by the Arcopian people; and it was no great secret to many of his intimates who had seen him now and then apply his hand in a peculiarly caressing and tentative manner to his temples that he regarded his own head as exceptionally adapted to the wearing of a kingly crown. His declaration, then, was particularly sweeping and comprehensive, but, in all probability, quite sincere; for I doubt if a statue of the most colossal proportions or a throne of the most magnificent possibilities would have eclipsed in his sight the new façade of the viceregal palace.

And to such a people as this he had come back empty-handed! He could not but regard himself as a very shabby and ungrateful fellow, and if his recollection of his quest for the Perugino had not remained to reassure him that his intentions, at least, had been of the best, he would doubtless have seen himself in a light more unfavorable still. He made up his mind at once that his people's evidence of regard and esteem should be requited as promptly as possible. He would repay them, and repay them in kind. He would erect, at his own expense, some great architectural monument and hand it over in fee simple to the Arcopian people. He would build a town hall, a palazzo púbblico that would be much more an honor and a

credit to the city than the present edifice; and, returning without great delay to the mainland, he would search out, in a kind of architectural tour, the most recherché and attractive models that Lombardy and Venetia had to offer, and would erect *vis-à-vis* to his own rehabilitated residence a fabric that should be a worthy companion to it as well as a lasting token of his gratitude.

It were ungracious, perhaps, to comment too pointedly here upon the Prorege's motives and preferences; but it is useless to deny that he was somewhat prone to self-indulgence, or to blink the fact that if he were going back to Italy on an architectural excursion he would be merely going just where he wanted to go in order to do just what he wanted to do. For him Italy was the land of lands, and architecture the interest of interests — the art of arts. His leaning toward music was truly, as I have elsewhere implied, sufficiently pronounced; but he never regarded that art as virile enough to fill the major space in his mind. Architecture, on the other hand, he considered the most masculine, vigorous, and dignified of all the arts, and the architect he esteemed as the most manly and honorable and many-sided of all art-workers — one who presented the highest union of the practical and the esthetic, who walked with his feet upon the earth and his head among the clouds, and wielded all the forces that art might offer — the rhythm of music, the glow of painting, the rotund pomp of sculpture, the graceful certitudes of geometry, the clearness and directness and force of rigorous logic. When the Prorege talked like this

his hearers nudged each other and whispered that he was an architect himself. And so he was. Not that he claimed to be absolute master of all the technical minutiæ which form a *sine qua non* for the active practitioner; but he had a clever pencil, a teeming fancy, and he could throw off graceful and picturesque sketches by the dozen without the slightest effort. He troubled himself very little about foundations, but was matchless when it came to façades. He reveled in theory, but in the matter of practice he was apt to fall back upon his bureau of construction. However, all the structures erected from his designs were very creditable, and the credit, of course, was monopolized by the Prorege himself. Nor was this altogether unjust; for the Prorege possessed a style characterized by that sort of cozy sublimity which may be illustrated by Raphael's "Vision of Ezekiel" in the Pitti, and though his buildings were necessarily of no great size, and involved generally but a very limited outlay, yet they had an effect of massive dignity and spacious splendor that other practitioners vainly endeavored to rival. The Prorege's faculty with stone and mortar was, in fact, the one thing that as much as any other endeared him to his subjects; for the Arcopians gloried in a monumental expression of their civic greatness, and looked upon peoples who could not express their race and epoch in enduring marble as very poor creatures indeed.

For this tour of his through the valley of the Po, which would be in a certain way official,— quite unlike, *sans dire*, that informal excursion through Tuscany,— the Prorege determined upon an escort com-

mensurate with his own dignity and with the importance of the undertaking. He set out, accordingly, with four or five of his younger nobility (he was extremely partial to young men: one with the right look out of his eyes and the right slope to his shoulders seldom failed of the princely favor), together with servants and attendants to the proper number; and he was prompted to add to his entourage a certain young gentleman whose acquaintance he had made at Pisa, and whom he invited to join him at Padua. This was Mr. George W. Occident, who, during his occupancy of the Palazzo Camera-Mobiglio, on the Pisan Lung' Arno, had made a distinct impression on the viceregal mind. The Prorege regarded him as a promising young barbarian, of whom, in skilful hands, something might be made,— as a blank page which, after the removal of certain thumb-marks and smudges, might receive words well worth the trouble of writing; and he resolved that he would give a part of his time during the coming month to the good work of preparing this blank page for the impress that the world — his world — should put upon it. I think it was the young man's total and appalling ignorance of the noble art of architecture that first prompted the Prorege to this missionary work. Occident, in his uninstructed state, really had no more business among the monuments that fill the valley of the Po or of the Arno than a deaf man has at a symphony concert, or a paralytic among the diamond-fields of Africa. He had no conception of the significance, social, artistic, historical, which brick and stone may take unto themselves, and he could

ramble about the streets of Verona or Siena or Vicenza,— almost every one of them a free gallery of masterpieces,— seeing nothing and quite unconscious that there was anything to see. If he happened to admire anything, it was sure to be the worst; this was one of the thumb-marks — one of the slightest, however — that the Prorege set himself to remove.

But this mere absence of knowledge gave the Prorege no particular concern; Occident was extremely bright, and picked up ideas with the utmost readiness, and whatever deficiencies he displayed might easily be made good. That which really troubled the princely pedagogue was the number of points on which the young man's opinions were already completely shaped and tenaciously held — opinions which the Prorege could not but regard as fallacious and erroneous — the result of birth, and early training (or lack of training), and ways of life, and thought more or less unguided and undisciplined and unillumined. Into this formidable field of thistles the painstaking Prorege forthwith plunged. For Occident was a clever fellow, a handsome fellow, a very prepossessing fellow; and as long as he himself had taken the first step in his own reclamation, the Prorege considered that no supplementary assistance which his experience could suggest should remain ungiven. Occident, according to his own account, was barely twenty-two when, having become master of himself and of an abundant fortune, he resolved to flee the general awfulness of Shelby County and to see for himself if life were not better worth living than he could make it seem in the region where he

had had the misfortune to be born. He tried more than once to set this region and its social peculiarities fully before the Prorege; but his hearer shook his head and smiled a sad autumnal smile, and sighed that such a state of things must forever remain quite unintelligible to *him*. But the Prorege found it no more unintelligible than Occident himself had found it intolerable; and he strove toward the light, first by a short residence in Dearborn, where no great advance was gained; and afterward in Shawmut, which seemed better, but not all his fancy had painted it. Then he had tried London and Paris, and more recently Florence and Rome. The Prorege was highly charmed by this little account of the peregrinations of his pupil, who seemed to him to have gained a higher post and a broader outlook with every step he had taken, and told him encouragingly that, placed as he now was, there would be but one higher step to take, and that he would soon be put in a position to take it. Occident rightly construed this as an invitation to visit Arcopia, and was properly grateful and elate.

But his gratitude quite outstripped his tact; he was constantly doing and saying things that evoked a regretful remonstrance from his patron. His very acknowledgment of the Prorege's letter of invitation contained a phrase which grated sadly on the viceregal ear; he wrote that he would join the party if he could "find the time." The Prorege took him up at once. It seemed strange to him, he declared, that a young man possessing a fortune of as many millions of lire as Occident was known to enjoy should

have difficulty in "finding time" for any plan that he might set on foot. To him the only man to be envied was the man whose time was in some degree his own; and the most pitiable object that civilization could offer was the rich man a slave to his chronometer. Too much had been said about the dignity of labor, and not enough about the preciousness of leisure. Civilization, in its last outcome, was heavily in the debt of leisure, and the success of any society worth considering was to be estimated largely by the use to which its *fortunati* had put their spare moments. He wrung from Occident the confession that, in the great land of which Shelby County may be called the center, activity, considered of itself and quite apart from its objects and its results, was regarded as a very meritorious thing; and he learned that the bare figure of leisure, when exposed to the public gaze, was expected to be decorously draped in the garment of strenuous endeavor. People were required to appear busy even if they were not. This gave the Prorege a text for a little disquisition on the difference between leisure and idleness. He was very eloquent over it, but I dare say you will pardon me if I fail to report his remarks.

I may note, however, his state of mind on learning that Occident, just before setting out for Padua, had sent a full synopsis of his own intended movements to the public prints. This way of doing things, in a private person, a person of no official station whatever, seemed to the Prorege to merit in the highest degree the brand of the reprehensible, and he lost no time in reading his young friend a second little lecture

in praise of privacy. In privacy, he declared, there was a fine charm, a high distinction; and in the present age, when the machinery of celebrity was so cunningly contrived that almost anybody who would drop in his penny might set the model to working, privacy rose to dignity, and might, indeed, rank as a virtue. At this point the harassed Occident brusquely declared that in Shelbyville nothing was more public than privacy, nothing more ostentatious than reticence, nothing more calculated to draw the unfavorable notice of the community than any attempt at seclusion; and the perplexed Prorege, with a mild glance of dismay, seemed to feel for the first time the magnitude of the task he had undertaken.

This little colloquy took place one cool September morning in the Piazza Grande at Vicenza, where the Prorege sat in a retired corner with a sketch-book in his lap, Palladio's great Palazzo del Consiglio before his eyes, and Occident, assiduously sharpening pencils, at his elbow. It is not to be inferred from the Prorege's attitude that he was any great devotee of the Palladian or, indeed, any more devoted to the Renascent than an Italian must necessarily be; but his taste was sufficiently catholic to allow him to enjoy a good thing of whatever school, and to him the rehabilitated palace at Vicenza seemed a very good thing indeed. He endeavored vainly to recall any other monument of the time that was as broad, as free, as gracious, as exempt from the chill of the mere classic,— one more marked with the mark of virile grace, more clearly stamped with the erudition of the scholar, more expressive of the *virtù* of the man of the world, more

dressed in the suave dignity of the "complete courtier." The Prorege appreciated the age of faith, I hope, but he appreciated quite as much the age of good breeding. He declared that in the present vulgar, mussy, weak-backed day the rivaling of this great fabric by any original creation was well-nigh — he did not say quite — impossible; and Occident, reverting to the Shelbyville court-house, with its crested mansards and its rococo cast-iron "statuary," almost understood what his preceptor meant.

The age of faith presently addressed them at Verona. If Vicenza presented itself to them in the trunk-hose and doublet of the Renaissance, the city on the Adige received them in the full canonicals of the middle ages, and, as they groped about the dusky precincts of San Zeno, or Sant' Anastasia, or San Fermo Maggiore, Occident became conscious of moving in an atmosphere distinctly non-secular. But even here, they found the world addressing them in the graceful and high-bred structures of Sammicheli and Fra Giocondo; and to the Prorege, who recalled now the various Giocondan façades lining the Canalazzo at Venice, the style evolved by the clever friar seemed peculiarly practicable, reputable, attainable, applicable to a wide variety of cases, and worthy of a much more extended vogue than it had ever enjoyed. He almost resolved that its modest, clear-cut, and sightly simplicity would solve his problem for him; and he sent back word to certain of his party who had lingered behind in Venice, to do what they could for him in this direction. In fact, the Prorege had seen nothing at all of his young nobles since reaching the

mainland; the Arcopian light cavalry, as he called them, moved quite independently of the main body of the army,—he was the main body,—and, indeed, there was a tacit understanding that their escort duty should be confined to the larger cities. He anticipated their making a wide sweep westward and joining him somewhere in time for them to enter Milan together. But they certainly did not turn up at Cremona, no word from them reached him at Piacenza, and he could only hope that, at the eleventh hour, they might appear at Pavia, or even at Milan itself. I may say just here, however, that they never did anything of the sort.

In the mean time Occident remained the Prorege's sole companion, and our amiable prince was thus enabled to concentrate upon him the attention that would otherwise have been distributed among his protégés at large. Dissertation, disquisition, argument, and instruction poured forth in an abundant flood, and poor Occident, hurried along on the rolling torrent, cast his eye about vainly for a succoring spar. The Prorege was now showing a disposition to leave the lower plane on which he had treated of the details of mere personal conduct, and to discuss, on the broad and lofty plateau of the Abstract, questions of government, society, and civilization at large,—all in brief sentences and, as it were, in words of one syllable, suited to the untutored mind for whose improvement he was laboring. They devoted more than one long stroll—strolling is, of course, at its best through the low arcades and empty piazze of a North Italian town—to consideration of affairs of state, and

I think I could show you the precise street-corner in Mantua—it was adorned with a sculptured balcony from which an inquisitive black-eyed young woman in a red neckerchief looked down—where they consumed a good half hour in casting about for a simile to properly illustrate the structure and course and functions of a national government. Occident—his figure, no doubt, was suggested by the great river which had served in some degree as their base of operations—saw a nation's life and progress as the hurrying onward of a vast stream,—much slime, doubtless, at the bottom, and more or less foam on the top, but a great volume of water sufficiently pure rolling orderly and powerfully on between. The Prorege, who slyly surmised that but for certain considerations Occident's "foam" might have been simply "froth," or even "scum," and who somewhat resented the intrusion of so aqueous a simile into an excursion purely architectural, rejoined that such an illustration might serve to set forth the movement of a restless democracy, but would hardly hold water when stretched to a wider application. He had seen more than one great river hurl itself headlong with all the blind, unreasoning fury of a destroying flood, involving all things in one indiscriminate disaster, and he had seen the same stream at another time, now shrunken away to a mere shadow of its former strength, dribble pitifully and ineffectually through the parched and dreary fields of a thirsty land. Drought and flood and whirlpools and hidden rocks, he feared, awaited the navigator on his young friend's impetuous and unreliable stream. No, for a true and adequate figure of

the structure of a state one must draw upon the noble art of architecture, and must picture to himself a vast fabric founded on the solid rock and towering up through a varied circumstance of strength and grace and grandeur for all the world to envy and admire: the substructure built from the ranks of a sturdy peasantry, the ponderous columns hewn from the quarry of a landed nobility, the graces of façade and sky-line conferred by the practice of those arts by which civilization is adorned, and this whole supporting structure crowned and rounded off and protected by a vast and swelling dome. The Prorege's expansive manner, just here, indicated clearly enough where the great feature of the Arcopian fabric, at least, might be found. Such an edifice, he went on to say, utterly excluded the idea of equality; each stone had its own place and function, and comparison was quite debarred. The peasant-hewn substructure, while a *sine qua non* as far as concerned the strength and stability of the social edifice, should rest satisfied with performing its humble though indispensable duty, and should leave to the shining columns, the sculptured pediments, the bossy swell of serried balustrades, and to the great dome itself the dignity of the Double Stars which the strolling connoisseur might see fit to confer. But was there to be no hope, Occident plaintively inquired, for the poor, modest little blocks in the lower courses? Was all opportunity for "rising in the world" to be hopelessly negatived by the weight of that remorseless mass of pomp and splendor above them? At which the Prorege shrugged his shoulders and replied that as long as the body

politic trudged along the highway of destiny the feet must take their share. He was willing enough to make the road as comfortable as possible, but he could not promise that poor humanity would ever be able to fly; and the spectacle of to-day's society, trying to lift itself by its own bootstraps, struck him, he declared, as the most ludicrous and most pitiful of exhibitions.

This, to poor Occident, who was the victim of untried and delusive theories and generous but ill-judged enthusiasms, seemed unspeakably callous and cruel, and in a retaliatory spirit he tauntingly inquired what was the boasted rock on which the modern Latin civilizations were founded. But the Prorege had anticipated this question and was ready with his answer. The edifice of a perfect ideal civilization, he declared, consisted of two parts—foundation and superstructure; but no civilization had ever existed, as far as he could recall, which exhibited these two parts in full and equal combination. The civilization of the South was a superstructure on a wavering and insecure foundation; the civilization of the North was a mere foundation with scarcely any superstructure at all. Now every structure, no matter how strongly founded, was destined to ruin in the end; such being the case, which sort would his young friend choose, — the graceful and pleasing fabric of the Italian civilization, erected on such an unstable mass of debris as a ruin-strewn past might offer and honeycombed by a certain political and financial incapacity, or the abortive and truncated effort of the Anglic civilization, — a foundation whose stability, indeed,

had as little to fear from the disintegration of deficit as from the shock of invasion, but whose jagged top-courses called, and seemed to call in vain, for the superstructure that in right should crown it? Would he choose the Opera, the Carnival, the Accademia, the Salon, the Concorso, the Grand Prix de Rome, all resting on a foundation of finance and politics more or less insecure; or would he accept Magna Charta, and Habeas Corpus, and Trial by Jury, and Representative Government and the Clearing-House,— a broad and magnificent foundation, indeed, but no more a building than a headless trunk is a man? How would he choose? How, in fact, had he already chosen? And the poor young fellow, whose presence in Italy was alone a sufficient answer, blushed and hesitated, and answered never a word. He delighted in the pictorial aspects of the Southern civilizations, but he was by no means blind to the merits of his own, and he felt that the more he defended the social scheme of which he was a part, the more he would be obliged to defend himself for having detached himself from it.

But the Prorege forbore to altogether overwhelm his pupil, and events presently took a turn which made it necessary for him to transfer his whole attention to the other young men on whom, during this excursion, he was expected to keep a guardian's eye. When within a day or two of Milan,— this was after a little flight southward, of which I shall soon take occasion to speak,— hearing nothing whatever of them, he caused inquiries to be made, which might better have been made before. These inquiries told

him so much on the one hand, and so little on the other that he resolved to turn about at once and to go back in all haste to Venice. In this city he learned at last why his escort had so persistently failed to appear. For the Prorege had scarcely departed from St. Mark's on his great architectural quest when these flighty and graceless youths, who had other interests besides stone and mortar, and who did not fully appreciate their good ruler in his ultra-didactic moods, had got their luggage and their servants together and gleefully scampered over the Semmering to Vienna. This conduct affected the sensitive Prorege most keenly. He felt outraged as a man, a scholar, a prince, a *censor morum*, and he set out immediately in search of the delinquents, for whose treachery he resolved to contrive some unique and terrible punishment. But as he failed to reach Milan on the one hand, so he failed to reach Vienna on the other. For he had got scarce fifty miles from Venice when the accidental but enforced breaking of his journey at a certain little town near the head of the Adriatic occasioned an abrupt abandonment of his chase. In this little town — its name I know, but shall not tell — a casual stroll introduced him to a certain exquisite little building which, he instantly declared upon encountering it, set the seal of success upon his whole undertaking, completing an enterprise which he was beginning to feel was about to lapse away to a poor and pointless close. It was the Palazzo Comunale of the place, a gem of pure Venetian gothic; rather small and simple, but of a light grace and a balanced symmetry quite unmatched. An air of dignity resided

in the row of arched windows that drew their line across its front and in the double stairway leading up to the doorway that opened in their midst; and the buoyant lightness of its pointed arches, and its fringe of wavy battlements, seemed almost enough to make it float. This, it came over the Prorege, was the most aquatic of styles — a style unsurpassable for the chief fabric in the capital of his island-state. He fell to sketching it *con amore;* his errant charges passed completely out of his mind. He returned to Arcopia with the rough plans of his chef-d'œuvre already blocked out: whether or no the young Arcopians themselves ever got back home again, I do not feel obliged to state.

VIII

ANAGNI: THE END OF A CAREER

THE Prorege, on turning back from Milan to follow in the track of his disloyal retinue, had given up something more than a mere inspection of the monuments that adorn the Lombardic capital; for he had purposed, in a moment of playful condescension, nothing less than a visit of surprise to the Seigneur of Hors-Concours high up in his alpine fastnesses. His comparative proximity to the mountains of Piedmont made this little excursion a matter of no great difficulty, and he had resolved to reveal to the younger members of the Arcopian nobility, who were somewhat prone to the delights of metropolitan life, the degree of dignity that might be enjoyed by a landed proprietor through simply residing upon his own estate. The elder generation of the Arcopian aris-

tocracy did reside mainly upon their own estates, and, accepting with equal readiness the rights and duties of their position and their degree, completely fulfilled their functions as "pillars of the state," and were thus quite exempt from the sorry expedient to which heads of families in less happily organized states were forced — that of depressing their social importance through their wives and daughters. Each of the great Arcopian nobles was under all circumstances and from all points of view the head and front of his own family and clan in no less degree than he was the proprietary and magisterial chief of his own lands and his own peasantry. The Arcopian population, in fact, except a fraction that followed the arts and another fraction that followed the sea, was largely agricultural, and exhibited in high union the chief virtue and the chief grace of civilized society — order and picturesqueness. The disturbing and ungracious catchword, "Égalité," had never crossed the Arcopian sea: if the Prorege had not been tolerably sure that his mild sway was to be undisturbed by the clangor of cantankerous boiler-makers and the bickerings of a bumptious, shopkeeping bourgeoisie he would never have undertaken the task at all. He regarded himself as a just, humane, and sympathetic ruler, but he believed that every man should have his own proper place, and fill it.

What he would have thought of the Seigneur, had circumstances but permitted him to push on to the Hauts Rochers de Hors-Concours, I scarcely care to surmise, for he would have found the master far away from home and have learned that he had not visited

his patrimony for the past year or more. Whether Hors-Concours' retainers could have told the Prorege their absent master's whereabouts I hardly know; but as a matter of fact he had been spending the early part of the autumn along with Pensieri-Vani among the Hernican hills. The time had come to Pensieri-Vani, as it indeed comes to every other sojourner in Italy, when he felt the need of some positive tonic, not physical merely, but rather mental; when he required some radical change of scene and environment. Hors-Concours had suggested that he visit him in Savoy, with possibly a fortnight at Neuchâtel. He, in turn, had suggested to Hors-Concours an excursion down toward the Neapolitan frontier,—a sojourn in the Abruzzi; and this latter suggestion so far prevailed that they spent several weeks together among the Pelasgic towns that look down into the valley of the Sacco. They exchanged, then, the somnolent air of Pisa, the supercivilized atmosphere of Florence, for the unvitiated azure of Anagni; the mild pastoralities of the Val d' Arno gave place to the wild and rugged drama of the Volscian landscape; and the amiable peasantry of mid-Tuscany fell back before the barbaric and essentially unreliable mountain-folk of the lower Abruzzi. They resolved that for a time they would make a truce with art and would seek man and nature in as unadulterate a state as could be hoped for in sophisticated Italy. They could think of no more promising field than the ancient territory of the Volsci and the Hernici, where nature rages untamed and untamable; where man exists hardly less primitive and barbaric; where the immemorial vil-

lages perched on the edges of beetling precipices frown down their looks of suspicion and defiance upon the upward-toiling visitor; where the excess of art which so hems in and oppresses one in other parts of the peninsula suffers a grateful abatement, and the iron rule of the old masters, so powerful elsewhere, is unheeded and unknown; where the omnipresence of biography is scaled down to scrappy mention of a few great medieval families,— the Gaetani with their principalities and the Conti with their pontiffs,— magnificent, indeed, but mercifully remote; where the chief monuments refer back to an age so distant and so obscure that no connecting-link has yet been found to bind them to ourselves,— monuments whose rugged and tremendous fabric, whose history and whose builders, could scarce have been less a riddle and a study to the Romans than to us. Such a turn in the wheel as this, the Cavaliere felt, would almost make a new man of him, and he had no doubt that when he settled down again to his studies in October the third volume of his great work on the Unknown Tuscan Masters, which had been languishing along for some time, would receive a very decided impetus.

Our two friends, as I have said, quartered themselves in Anagni — Anagni, venerable and picturesque old town that clings terrace above terrace to the bare sides of its limestone hills; Anagni, that overflows with a profusion of quaint medieval mementos tided over from the most obscure of the old Gothic days, and that from its rocky perch opens up to every casual glance long vistas of wild and tumultuously magnificent landscape. They camped out, as it were,

in one of the great vaulted chambers of the antique papal palace, a massive and cumbersome relic now harboring a variety of tenants and devoted to a variety of uses; and they softened the *dura sorte* of stony floors and narrow casements by a shelfful of books, a flute and a fiddle, and a row of flower-pots set on their window-sill.

They sought early to discharge their duty to Anagni's few historical reminiscences. They fixed upon the very stone in the pavement of the dim old cathedral where fiery Alexander stood to fulminate his curse against the doughty Barbarossa — an occurrence which, I understand, is still a matter of local gossip; and they were at some pains to pay a formal visit to the obdurate old apartment under their own roof in which the hapless Boniface — all this is but a matter of yesterday in Anagni, the last thing that happened there — felt the full weight of the Norman warrior's mail-clad hand. These definite devoirs to pontifical dignity were soon disposed of; but there remained after, environing them like a cloud, the vague, nebulous body of tradition that the great historical families of the town — the "twelve stars of Anagni" — have left behind them. The Cavaliere, who was something of a genealogist, and who knew more of the history of the great medieval papal houses — the Conti, the Savelli, and so on — than there was any real need of knowing, was thus given an opportunity to branch out in yet a new direction into the inexhaustibilities of the peninsula; and when in the cathedral of Anagni he stood beneath the tombs of the Gaetani and read the mosaics which

blazon forth the illustrious alliances of their line, he felt an irresistible impulse to add to that long list of the great with whom he was on terms of an at least theoretical familiarity a few members of that lofty house — a house which, deriving its impetus from the Greek emperors, came in the course of a few centuries to lord it over as many counties and duchies and principalities between Rome and Naples as might almost make an empire in themselves. Before this great clan, who could dare and do, who could will and have, he shrank away as a very weak, pitiful, forceless creature. The stippling technique of his own day seemed immeasurably poor and paltry compared with the broad, free, sketchy touch with which these men dashed off their stirring lives; and he stood abashed before that fiery and robust intensity which, so gloriously indifferent to the subtilties of the grammarian, the niceties of the manicure, and the torments of the supersensitive self-analyst, could fix its intent upon some definite desire and move forward unswervingly to its attainment. Poor moderns! he sighed, who with all our wishing never reached our end, and with all our thinking never know what we really think, after all.

But why should I seem to cite the Cavaliere himself, as living through other lives, and making but a thin blood by dieting on the unnutritious husks of a dead-and-gone past, when an example much more striking and complete comes so opportunely to hand? For Pensieri-Vani and his friend had scarce passed a week at Anagni, when, one morning, on emerging from the great, cavernous arches of the gateway

which vestibuled their temporary abode, they brushed against a little old gentleman who was just passing in. Pensieri-Vani instantly recognized the thin, flowing white locks, the long, threadbare black coat, the dim but indomitably enthusiastic blue eye, and the wavering but still manful old gait; but he had yet to learn what had induced the eminent Gregorianius—the same who, some time before, had assigned the Iron Pot to the Etruscans—to bring his eighty years into this wild and difficult region. And yet, his familiarity with this great scholar's previous career might have enabled him, with a few moments' thought, to reason the matter out clearly enough. The venerable German had, in fact, entered upon the fourth and last stage of his laborious and distinguished life. In his youth, some sixty years before, he had devoted himself—his learning, his hopes, his passions, his all—with a mighty and a solemn oath to Italy; and in this allegiance he had never failed nor faltered. One of the generation of 1830, he had enthusiastically joined the ranks of the Romanticists, and he became one of the most ardent and accomplished medievalists of the day. His position and his fortune—he enjoyed but a subordinate post in one of the great universities—did not permit him, for many years, a realization of the delights of travel beyond the Alps; but he availed himself, in the mean while, of the best substitute that offered itself: he theorized the entire peninsula with the greatest zeal and ardor, and was perfectly acquainted with the frescos at Assisi and the mosaics at Ravenna years before the Brenner diligence bore him down into the home of art.

By this time he should have had a wife, a hearthstone, a family of children; but he declared that Italy should be his home, his spouse, his domestic circle, and he buried himself for years among the medieval memories of the minor Tuscan towns. When he emerged from them at the age of forty or thereabouts his youthful enthusiasms were somewhat cooled, and an occasional silver thread among his black locks reminded him that he was no longer young. He told himself frankly that a man of his mature age could no longer continue becomingly to dabble in the mere affairs of yesterday — for what is five hundred years in the course of time? — and with a sigh over some lost illusions and some mistaken theories he closed the volume of the middle ages and determined to devote himself for the future to the study of classical antiquity at Rome. It was then that he Latinized his cognomen, and began to lay the foundation of the reputation for boundless erudition which during the latter part of his life he undoubtedly enjoyed. He took hold of the Forum at a time when the topography of that celebrated though restricted tract was a much more vexatious and complicated study than it is to-day, and in a masterly, a monumental, work upon that deeply historic inclosure he marked a distinct era in the study of the Roman civilization. But not more than a decade had passed before the whole of the Roman city lay under his eye as plain as a pikestaff, and the manners and customs of the latter days of the Republic were as familiar as those of his contemporaries; and his mind began to reach out for something more recondite, more antique, more mys-

tic, more obscure. Though this was just at about the time when the first modern excavations of the Forum were verifying or annihilating the various theories of the past generation, he found himself quite unable to maintain an interest in a theme from which he had once supposed his interest never could depart. Some of his own ideas were shown to be substantially correct, and some altogether erroneous; but he took very little heed; he was beginning to call himself an old man, and he confessed the need of an interest in accordance with his years. So he surrendered the honorable and accustomed place which his long residence in Rome had given him, and turned his plodding feet toward the vague and shadowy byways of Etruria,— a land whose mysteries, though dense, are not impenetrable, and whose beginnings, while not primordial, appeared sufficiently remote. He should have been a grandfather now, with an assured and revered seat round which grandsons played; but his only "heimath" was the rough country inn where dire discomfort reigned and where the children of his host listened with eyes of amused wonder to his efforts in a tongue which he had never yet fully mastered. In this obscure region he kept himself until the children of these children succeeded to their parents' wondering office; his aggregation of notes and plans and diagrams and sketches was so voluminous, so exhaustive, as to fill the cognoscenti with an awe that was almost akin to pity; but the grand work for which all this was designed as mere material was never undertaken. He now knew Etruria through and through; Agylla held no secret from him; Tarchna and Pultuke

were his familiars. The fatal moment came at last when the sense of the triviality that must necessarily permeate the mere Knowable took full possession of him; and as he listlessly surveyed the mass of memoranda that witnessed the labor of a score of years, it came over him that nothing short of the Utterly Unknowable could seem an adequately dignifying study for one so learned and so old. In one portion only of his beloved peninsula could such a study be found, and he resolved to betake himself, while yet his physical and mental powers might serve him, to the hoary cyclopean towns among the Hernican hills, where the venerable and the unintelligible exist in an ideal union.

He had never been without the power of drawing young men about him, and when he took a modest little room in the palace at Anagni, his two youthful fellow-lodgers promptly and enthusiastically placed themselves at his disposal, and, after pretty largely despoiling their own quarters to make his a little less uncomfortable, they accompanied him in all the various excursions by which he taxed his failing strength. They went with him to Cori, which, from its temple-crowned and triple-walled hill, looks across the wide reaches of the Pontine Marshes toward Monte Circello and the islands of the sea; they attended him to Segni, where he laboriously measured the stones that compose its great cyclopean gateway, and painstakingly enunciated to them his theory of the round arch; and to Alatri, where he stalked exultantly over the vast and towering walls, while his thin white hair was blown about by the winds that sweep across the

rugged foot-hills of the Apennines. They went with him even up to Norba, which, despite their earnest remonstrance, he determined to reach. They dragged him with infinite toil and care across the glaring limestone steeps over which the path, with precipices above and below, takes its rough and stony way, and eventually placed him, panting and exhausted, upon the dismantled bastions of that tremendous and immemorial fortress. Here the muse of the prehistoric communicated the divine afflatus, and when he raised up his drooping frame and stretched out his futile old arm, and with a kindling eye and a ringing voice openly exulted over the wild grandeur of the prospect before him and the scarce inferior grandeur of the antique fabric beneath him, our two young friends were inexpressibly touched and uplifted. But this was about the last of his considerable excursions. He descended to Anagni in a condition of physical and mental exhaustion, and henceforth confined himself almost altogether to the vicinity of that old papal town, for which he seemed to be developing a very tender affection. His companions had noticed at Cori that he seemed hardly more interested in the antiquities at the top of the hill than in the beautiful old convent that nestled on its olive-clad side; and, again, that in descending the rock-cut stairway which leads down from high-perched Alatri he had cast back more than one look of reluctant tenderness at the rose window and the arched portals of the gothic cathedral. Nor had they failed to observe how, on the return from Norba, his thoughts had gone down — whither his feet dared not follow — to Ninfa, the medieval Pompeii, the walls of whose castle and monastery and

deserted dwellings rise dank and ivy-draped from the pestilent plain of the Paludi Pontini. And when, after a few days' rest, he became in some degree restored and began to wander feebly and musingly among Anagni's quaint streets and piazze, caressing with a tender eye the picturesque architectural fragments that meet one at every turn,—the sculptured lions and griffins, the open loggias, the outside staircases, the trefoiled windows, the great arched doorways,—when he took to wandering abstractedly through the stony corridors of the palace and to sitting solitary in the dusky aisles of the cathedral, his companions felt that nothing merely cyclopean could have much further interest for him,—that in his last days he was returning to the cherished medievalism of his first. It was not long before he humored them by accepting a kind of rude couch which Pensieri-Vani found in a remote chamber and placed beside his wide and high-placed window. Here he would lie quietly and contentedly by the hour, languidly watching the mountain-sweep of the clouds, and murmuring to himself of many a far-off time and many a bygone name; and here within a month or so he died. The lonely death-bed of this abstracted alien was not without its effect upon the Cavaliere, who, confronted with this picture of his own possible end, seriously contemplated, for a few weeks, a change in his life that would bring it more into accord with those around him. When I met him two or three years later, however, at Palermo, he seemed to have wholly slipped back into his old ways and to have become too confirmed and too inveterate a "looker-on" to justify any great hope of his conversion.

IX

AROUND ROME: THE MOTH AND THE CANDLE

THE venerable Gregorianius, during those last days at Anagni, had consigned to Pensieri-Vani's care the voluminous record of his artistic career in Italy. This he did, hardly more from the peculiar isolation of his geographical position, than from the scarce greater isolation that marked his social environment. The ultimate disposal and possession of his great mass of raw material he fixed with an admirable clearness, but its present care and the task of supplying some minor deficiencies he relegated to the young man whom, with a kind of affectionate playfulness, he came to call his grandson. But one consideration disturbed the placidity of his last days; in reviewing this great *omnium gatherum*, at once his life-labor and his monument, he could not blind himself to the existence of one great hiatus in the progression of what would otherwise be an almost complete presentation of the history of the Italian

civilizations; and, before his vast tomes should be sent over the Alps to find a permanent lodging, he desired that his hiatus might be filled. He had done justice to the Lombard republics, to Latium and Magna Græcia, to the Etruscan and Pelasgic towns; but to the unique period of Narses and Theodoric and Galla Placidia he had never given, as he now keenly felt, due attention. It was his request, therefore, that Pensieri-Vani repair to Ravenna, and there, in some degree at least, fill the only considerable blank of which his history could accuse him.

The Cavaliere very gladly acceded to this request, but an immediate compliance he could not bring himself to make. On leaving Anagni he was unable to deny himself that short sojourn in Rome which his vicinity to it seemed to invite, and his visit to Ravenna he set some months ahead. Besides, as he argued properly enough, such an undertaking required some preliminary study, and Rome, aside from Ravenna itself, was the only place where such a study could advantageously be made. He would justify his Roman stay by some attention to the mosaics of Santa Prassede and San Damiano, freshen his acquaintance with Belisarius and Justinian and S. Apollinare, and betake himself to the Exarchate in the spring.

He did not take up his residence in Rome itself, but found quarters — or perhaps I should say, made them — in a certain dilapidated old villa on a hillside a mile or two outside the walls. This villa belonged to a once exalted family from the south, whose present fall in fortune was amply figured by the neglect and decay into which their possessions had been allowed

to lapse. Its high-ceiled apartments, arabesqued after the dainty and graceful manner of the Renaissance, were already in part insufficiently tenanted by a peasant colony that extracted an uncertain livelihood from the reluctant hillside; its cavernous basement, supporting a broad-arched façade whose noble contours acknowledged the hand of a great master, submitted to the huddling of carts and the lowing of cattle; and the once stately garden smiled ruefully through its crumbling statues and choked-up fountain-basins. But the Cavaliere, who never failed to get on admirably with the Italian contadino, and who invariably placed the picturesque before the merely comfortable, considered himself very satisfactorily situated; and when he had brightened up the dinginess of his frescoed bed-chamber with a few contemporaneous trifles and had exacted a promise from his co-tenants that the excursions of their poultry should be somewhat curtailed,—one presumptuous black hen, in particular, ignored all metes and bounds,—he felt himself established and at home.

He did not consider himself "at home" in the sense which society attaches to that phrase, however, and the last thing in the world that he expected was a visitor; but a week had scarcely passed in his new abode before visitors came. For, as he was standing early one forenoon at his window he noted a carriage waiting below on the highway, and presently he distinguished a party of three persons toiling up through the two hundred yards or so of roadless orchard that cut the villa off from the outside world. The first person that he made out was the young Mr. Occident

whom he had met once or twice at Pisa, the second was the Countess Nullaniuna, and in the third he was surprised to find none other than the Prorege of Arcopia himself. He knew, of course, that the Prorege was in Italy, but he knew equally well the reasons which had operated to keep his august friend at a distance from the capital itself. So when the Prorege hastened to make an elaborately off-hand intimation of his desire to take advantage of being on the mainland to show his young companion certain notable things in the vicinity of Rome which he had hitherto overlooked, and then added, with a studied carelessness, that he was spending a week strictly incognito at one of the villas above Frascati, the Cavaliere instantly perceived the whole situation: the Prorege *could* not keep away from Rome, he *would* not venture within it (there was no room in the Roman firmament for the sun and the moon, too), and his pathetic flutterings around its outskirts must by no means be made a matter of public knowledge. The Contessa's accounting for herself was much more direct, and done wholly by herself. By a singular coincidence she, also, was sojourning at Frascati, and having, a day or two back, climbed up to Tusculum along with her present companions, she had determined, while standing on those breezy heights, that the little Roman theater nestling there must again come into use. Her mind was firmly set on a sort of classic *fête champêtre* which should be adapted in the proper degree to the place; there should be music and declamation, and such other features of ancient days as the modern arts could emulate, and the Cavaliere was prayed to

assist. She entered more into the details of her plan as the party made the rounds of the villa. The rusticity of his ménage opened her eyes to a surprising extent for one apparently so strongly bent on the return to nature, and impelled by yearnings for the great god Pan; but the Prorege was immensely diverted, and as he picked his way bravely through the stable (which was just under the *apartamento nobile*) he laughingly complimented the Cavaliere upon the originality of his taste. Occident could not emulate in this direction the temerity of his patron, but he lost his heart at once to the ruinous garden-terrace, and mournfully avowed that the Cavaliere's distance from Shelbyville could never be expressed in mere miles alone. Might he ever expect to see the like in the home of his childhood? Alas, three centuries were none too few to bring it about, even after a beginning were made, and Shelby County, he keenly felt, might take much more than three for even *that!*

The Contessa recovered her tone in the great *salóne*, and frankly confessed that the Cavaliere's stuccoed arabesques were quite as good as her ilex-grove and her stone-pines up at Frascati. Quite as good, that was, for general purposes; but not quite so good — she was making, just then, something of a détour to avoid the black hen — as a promenade for poultry. The Cavaliere laughed, and asked her to accept the poultry as a part of the entertainment; and the Contessa laughed back, and asked to be assured that she could consider *him* a part of *her* entertainment. The Cavaliere gave her a courteous assurance that she might, but he knew well enough who the central figure

of the occasion was to be, and he cautioned her not to expect too much. And there was one thing more she must not expect, the Prorege interjected: his presence. The Contessa had seemed to imply on one occasion that the Tusculan diversions were to be in his honor, but he was too clever to suppose that,— knowing, as well as Pensieri-Vani did, whose honor was chiefly considered, though much too politic to let her suppose that he knew it was not his; and he explained to the protesting lady that twenty people would recognize him; that on such an occasion Frascati, for all practical purposes, was Rome; and added, that while he would not deprive his young friend of so characteristic an entertainment, he himself should spend the day at Ostia. To all her prayers that he, too, would honor the entertainment at Tusculum he was unyielding quite (for he feared that in even his present vicinity to Rome he might have singed his wings); but in the matter of Ostia he compromised by postponing his excursion until they could make a party and go out there together.

Of the Contessa's fête I can give but the scantiest notes. The only looker-on was a wild-eyed shepherd who scowled down upon the festivities from the height of the ruin-strewn arx, where he was pasturing his flock, and who, for the first time within his memory, saw the familiar little semicircular tiers of lichen-covered steps occupied other than by the rustling of the lizard and the nodding of the wild flowers. Over these steps a company of twenty or thirty persons now disposed themselves, while three or four gaily dressed young people, who wore knots of ribbon

and carried gilded crooks, moved brightly through a little scene, the others, meanwhile, gently clapping their hands or nodding their heads in approval. Then a lady rose and sang a song which he was sure he had once heard in Rome, when he had gone there four or five years ago; a young gentleman, seated carelessly upon a broken capital, played on a violin a very brief and simple little air; a middle-aged one, in spectacles, stood out and read a short address full of rhyme and rhythm; — almost every one did something, except one light-haired young man who seemed incapable of doing any more than enjoying what the others contributed. And, last of all, a lady who wore her hair under a triple band, and had draped her figure in a long white robe with a golden border, came forward through great applause, and, taking her place upon the little stone platform which faced the seats, began to declaim in a kind of chanting voice. Her voice would rise and fall and rise again, and her arms moved in graceful gestures, and little cries of admiration went up from the circle before her. Her tones became more and more impassioned and her body swayed more freely to and fro, and the bursts of applause became more numerous and more enthusiastic. And finally there was one great outburst of plaudits, and the lady seemed to fall against a broken column that stood close by, and three or four of her hearers ran to her side and lifted her up, and two gentlemen advanced and placed a kind of wreath upon her head, which she attempted to decline but was finally induced to wear; and everybody cried out "Evviva the New Corinne!" and came flocking about

her; and the lady seemed very happy and gracious, but not as if receiving any more than her just due. And then some baskets were brought out, and cloths were laid on the grass and over the mossy steps, and fruits and cake were spread out upon them, and long-necked bottles passed from hand to hand, and healths were drunk; and then the gay throng sang a parting song and passed away slowly down the hillside.

But as regards the Prorege's excursion to Ostia I am able to give a more extended account; and inasmuch as his experiences there gave rise to any number of biting little pleasantries throughout the capital, perhaps your fund of interest may last through a recital more detailed than that of the Contessa's Tusculan fête. They were a party of five, and it was arranged that Occident should sit with the coachman on the way out and Pensieri-Vani on the way back. The fifth member was a lady — for the Contessa, despite her advanced and constantly advancing views, did not care to figure as the only female in the party of men; and this friend she presented to Pensieri-Vani (with some disregard of etiquette, at least; but she was determined to disregard something) as a peculiarly acceptable associate — one of the Altissimi princesses, in fact, whom the Cavaliere had met some years back at Orvieto; since wedded and widowed, and long the Contessa's closest intimate. The Princess was a somber beauty of a grave and chastened demeanor, and the Contessa, who was fully as flighty and capricious and *théâtrale* as a woman of semi-genius usually finds it necessary to be, posed and fidgeted upon this dark background to her heart's con-

tent. Her cue this morning seemed to be that of genius-blasted fragility — that burst of impassioned improvisation on the previous day had left her so sadly nerveless and shattered; and with an air of pleading artlessness she hung upon the amused Prorege, stimulating in a hundred wily ways his interest in her fête and in her own performance. But when the Prorege, who was past-master of the art of self-defense against womankind, would cunningly balk and tantalize her with a finesse quite equal to her own, she could not restrain herself from shooting out a covert glance of such an enigmatical character that, had the complacent Prince caught it, he might well have doubted the final adequacy of his defense. Her eyes sparkled with a malicious mischievousness, and her whole manner, as the Prorege saw it in the light of subsequent developments, seemed to foreshadow a delicate and ingenious revenge — to place him in the misprised ranks of the duped and the victimized. Their reception at the inn, which forms the nucleus of the handful of habitations that go to make up the modern town of Ostia, certainly betrayed the workings of some occult influence: Pensieri-Vani had meagerly lunched there some years before on an omelet with a bit of rye bread and cheese, when the attention of the landlord had not gone to the length of disturbing the brace of gaunt hounds whose eyes mutely devoured these frugal viands, or of expelling the flock of fowls that clucked and fluttered over the chance falling of a crumb; and now the present sense of order, of attentiveness, of accomplished expectancy seemed to quite transform the place. Assuredly no

such refreshment could have been set forth, no such decorum preserved, no such excess of courtesy displayed had not the coming and the quality of the guests been previously known. And the character of their reception in no degree deteriorated when they left the inn, and, previous to advancing toward the recognized lions of the place, looked into the church close by. The Princess, who for a number of years had performed her devotions almost exclusively amidst the ornate worldliness of San Carlo al Corso, was desirous of seeing what this lonely and humble little temple was like; and the whole party, having plenty of time on their hands, abetted her in her novel way of taking hold of Ostia. They were met on the threshold by the single priest in charge, a dark and sallow young man of peasant extraction, whose lonely battle with midsummer's malaria had left him wholly gaunt and enervate. He saluted them with the deference which the church sometimes shows to the world, though he was too true an Italian to be awed, or even embarrassed, by their rank; and he brightened up into something almost like eagerness as he offered to do the honors of his charge. The Prorege indulgently praised the wretched frescos which he exhibited so proudly, and the Contessa called up a flickering smile of pleasure in his emaciated face as she feigned an enthusiasm for the paltry fripperies of the high altar. This appreciative interest emboldened him to suggest their ascent to the gallery, where, from his manner, the great treasure of the church was to be revealed. The great treasure was a small cabinet organ, and Occident — triumph-

ing in the ubiquity of the Western genius, yet somewhat taken aback by a new illustration of the incongruities it sometimes precipitated — read upon it a name familiar to his earliest years. The priest, who evidently conceived it an impossibility for his beloved instrument to be guilty of a discord of any kind whatever, pleaded with a mute but unmistakable pathos that its long silence might now be ended; and the Princess, motioning Pensieri-Vani to the keyboard, sang this poor solitary a churchly little air with such a noble seriousness and such a gracious simplicity as to move not only him but all the others too. Occident, in particular, who kept within him quite unimpaired his full share of that fund of sensibility which is one of the best products of Shelby County, and who would have given half his millions just then to have been able to sit down and play the simplest tune, implored Pensieri-Vani in looks, if not in words, to do for him what he himself was so powerless to compass; and the Cavaliere, who, like a good and true musician, preferred support from the lowest quarter to indifference in the highest, kept his place until their poor host, charmed, warmed through and through, attached again to the great body of humanity, could scarcely trust himself to voice his thanks. But the Princess whispered in the Cavaliere's ear, as his series of plain and simple little tunes came to an end, that he had not lost since she last heard him. As for their beneficiary, to repay this kindness there was but one thing left that he could do; they had exhausted the church itself, but the bishop's residence close at hand — the bishop himself was installed at non-mala-

rial Velletri, in the Monti Albani — should discharge the debt. So the Prorege and his companions, who (except the Contessa) had lost all thoughts of Roman Ostia, filed slowly through the various apartments of the episcopal palace,— large, empty rooms with asceticism stamped on their tile flooring, and self-denial woven into the scant folds of the chintz furniture-coverings; the young father's fervor even led them to an inspection of the episcopal kitchen, where long rows of copper pans and kettles hung in bright-scoured idleness upon the walls. The Prorege, who was finding housekeeping much more interesting than archæology was likely to be, and who passed these sacerdotal privacies in review with a considerate sobriety that was perfect of its kind, would willingly have lingered on for even more intimate revelations; but their guide himself appeared all at once to become conscious that he was taking their time from other things, and abruptly brought his entertainment to an end,— begging indulgence for having detained them so long, and hoping, with a certain air, that their afternoon might be as fruitful and enjoyable as possible. It was an air that clearly brought the unconscious Prorege within the shadow of the shortly-to-happen.

There is at Ostia a little foot-path that takes its way, through mazes of flowering thickets and of nameless scraps of crumbling ruin, close along the low bank of the Tiber, where little is in sight but the stone pines of Castel Fusano, the distantly blue outlines of the Alban Hills, the few spare masts of Fiumicino's shipping, and the big round machicolated tower of Ostia's own castle; while nothing is in sound but the rustling

shrubs and the smoothly swirling waves that lap unceasingly the ruins of ancient greatness. In this retired spot the messenger of the shortly-to-happen made his appearance. He took the guise of a kind of upper workman, whose dress and person bore evidence of recent labor, and whose manner, despite its excessive deference, betrayed an agitation and a sort of breathless responsibility for which no adequate cause appeared in view. He craved pardon for not having found his Excellency sooner (the Prorege's stare of astonishment at this unexpected recognition of his quality won from the Contessa a smile of derisive triumph); the excavation, he announced, was now well under way and promised to exceed in value and interest anything of recent years; and he hoped it would be their pleasure to allow him to conduct them to the spot at once.

The slightly dismayed Prorege and his somewhat surprised companions, who now perceived that their visit was to be recognized by very marked and exceptional attentions, followed their guide across a field bristling with thistles and littered with broken bricks to a remote spot, where a group of expectant workmen and two or three mounds of fresh-dug earth indicated the day's activities. The excavations were in that delightful state when a moment more might reveal and determine anything. A few coins and utensils, carefully set to one side, were shown the new arrivals, and the head workman was hoping for a villa, at least; while the intendant himself, who presently appeared, hot and breathless, from quite a different direction, was looking for nothing less than a temple. The un-

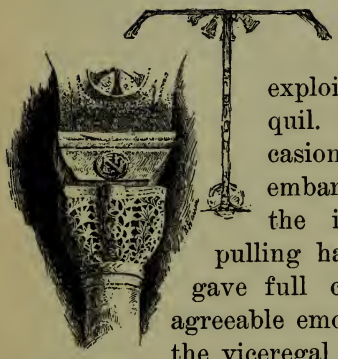
settled Prorege, now a prey to all manner of doubts and fears and suspicions, hailed with relief the advent of some one who could speak with authority, and requested that he might be told at once to whom he was indebted for this great surprise, and the Contessa, whose Tusculan entertainment the prince had dared to slight, could hardly conceal her exultation when the intendant announced that the excavations had been undertaken by express command of the King himself.

The King! All was known, then; and when the intendant went on to say how his Majesty had taken this means of showing his deep regard for the viceroy of his Arcopian province, the Contessa laughed aloud. For the Prorege's face, schooled as it was in all the arts of simulation and dissimulation, betrayed with perfect clearness the tumult within him. I shall not claim that he was torn by a thousand conflicting emotions; half a dozen made as violent a complication as he was able to endure. He was pleased and enraged and flattered and indignant and suspicious; but before and above all he was deeply mortified. He could not deny the graciousness of the royal decree; but he tormented himself, now with the thought that some unsuspected carelessness of his own might have betrayed him, now with the belief that some deep and hideous treachery had revealed his vicinity to Rome; and the thought that his undignified skulkings about the capital (during a week which he had designed should never be strictly accounted for in the Arcopian annals) might even now be a story on the common tongue, filled him with a shame too deep for words.

One thing, however, he could yet do. He had still an opportunity to redeem himself, and he would take advantage of it. He would boldly and frankly enter the capital and pay his devoirs at the Quirinale, quite as if nothing had happened. The moth, having flown *into* the flame, must now perforce fly *through* it. The King, it is said, was disposed to receive his lieutenant with a quizzical good humor; but the Prorege, who, when cornered, could assume a degree of dignity which even royalty would not venture to violate, passed through the ordeal with an unimpaired self-respect. And whatever gibes were indulged in at his expense by a witty and sarcastic city were vitiated, so far as he himself was concerned, by his immediate departure for the north and his present return to Arcopia.

X

RAVENNA: A "HUMAN INTEREST"



THE Contessa's conscience, at the close of her little exploit, remained perfectly tranquil. She knew that she had occasioned her host some slight embarrassment, but she felt that the interest which her wire-pulling had added to the excursion gave full compensation for any disagreeable emotion that may have stirred the viceregal breast. She herself carried away from Ostia an antique golden bracelet as a souvenir of the visit, and the possession of so unmistakable a token of the success of their excursion quite blinded her to the fact that the day might have had its drawbacks for any of her companions. The duped Prorege did not learn positively of her double-dealing (whatever his suspicions) until months afterward, when the last trace of rancor had left his heart; but even then he felt that his reputation as a man of *esprit* demanded his visiting upon his betrayer a revenge as dexterous and clever as her own ingenious offense

seemed to call for. Circumstances, after some delay, gave him an opportunity; he was enabled to wound the Contessa's vanity in its tenderest point, and to seriously cloud that reputation for cleverness which she had so long and so sedulously nursed.

But our present concern is rather with Pensieri-Vani, who now redeemed his promise, given at Anagni, by making a visit to Ravenna. Ravenna, which is to Pisa as the dead to the sleeping, was not a town that the Cavaliere would have chosen even for a temporary residence, and its reception of him (not merely chill, but almost clammy) decided that his stay there was not to overrun the necessary by a single day. He found Ravenna huddled together in the midst of her wide and empty plain, cowering under the threatenings of a cold and leaden sky, and shivering at the touch of the raw and gusty winds that swept through her empty and lifeless streets; and he entered at once upon that series of forlorn and benumbing sessions in sepulchral churches which a month of study in the town of Honorius and Valentinian implies: a term of chasmal intimacy with uncouth mosaicked saints, whose grim and awful aspect fascinates to repel, or repels to fascinate; a petrified phantasmagoria of long-cold altars, of marbled episcopal thrones, of palmed and peacocked sarcophagi, all intershot with such near and heart-warming considerations as Byzantine politics and Ostrogothic heresy. But the Cavaliere pursued his duty daily, though he felt his blood congealing and his heart growing cold within him.

A little social diversion would have made all the

difference in the world; but there is no society in Ravenna, and the Cavaliere, who had an acquaintance in most of the other north-Italian towns, was all but a stranger here. He knew one family, it is true; but his visits to the Caduti were more a pain than a pleasure. He fully perceived the emptiness of their present and the hopelessness of their future; and the pinched form of blue-skinned want which showed out through the garment of simulated prosperity with which they endeavored to cloak their life of privation, and even of suffering, struck him with a chill more deadly than any that Ravenna's dank baptisteries or darkling crypts gave forth. Outside this circle of impoverished nobility Pensieri-Vani knew but one person in the entire town. The Duke of Avon and Severn (who was a law unto himself, and who had elected to take up his residence in the Romagna) was quite the reverse of impoverished; and our friend, if he had extended his visit to that quarter, would have run little risk of being distressed by the spectacle of pride struggling to conceal the end of its long, slow, and cruel lapse from affluence. But the two were by no means on the best of terms; any exchange of civilities between them was, in fact, quite out of the question. Avon, who was old enough to have known better (his age was about that of the Prorege, or a little more), had taken the Cavaliere's course at Pisa, concerning the Sodoma, as a personal affront; and the Cavaliere had not been able to forbear his jest at the lumbering noble who had arrived on the scene twenty-four hours too late. Avon had in turn met Pensieri-Vani with a massive and elaborate disdain (for if an English

baronet can disparage the most noble and historic of Italian families, who shall sound the depths of scorn under which an English duke may bury a simple cavaliere whose title is but recent and honorary?), and the young man felt that the account was by no means closed yet. But the account remained open at Ravenna, and Avon meanwhile moved unvexed along the course which he had marked out. He had taken up his quarters in an old palace of which the Caduti in their better days had been the owners, and he was amusing himself (while prosecuting some object which nobody quite understood) by a life of ostentatiously picturesque philanthropy which, while it made his name one to conjure with long after among the crowded ranks of Ravenna's famished *poveríni*, planted daily daggers in scores of hearts as noble as his own — and much more sensitive. He kept a kind of open house, and every day his *pian terréno* received into its ample apartments a throng of local mendicants come to taste of stranger hospitality; a throng whose facile and pictorial gratitude gave him, while its novelty lasted, a very large measure of self-complacency; a throng that gradually came to include such of the lower grades of respectability as look out from Ravenna's windows, in the guise of worn women, with an appealing hopelessness in the eyes, or as hover about the doors of the *caffè*, with the aspect of unshaven and shabby middle age, expectant of some refreshment at the hands of the breakfasting visitor. Avon had lived long enough in Italy to need an outward and palpable form of expression for thoughts and motives and emotions; he

preferred life to manifest itself in such a way as to be susceptible of artistic representation. He could have drawn for some deserving charity a check for a thousand times the cost of his daily Ravennese banquet, and have received no pleasure whatever in doing so; for the formal letter of thanks from some Board of Guardians or Trustees that such an abstract and circuitous and impersonal and highly evolved way of doing things might have evoked would have given him little satisfaction compared with the palpable and fully-materialized gratitude that his own direct and simple method called out, — a method whose patriarchal and elemental character was quite untinged with modernism. Seals and official signatures were unsatisfying enough as compared with the picturesque groups of mendicants whose deferential salutations met his every egress from the Palazzo Caduti's great *portóne*. But it is by no means to be inferred that his procedure abroad in any degree indicated his procedure at home. Worcester witnessed no such overflowing benevolence as did Ravenna; his own tenantry were far from idealizing him into a philanthropist.

His purposes, whatever they were, took him frequently to the town library, where he commanded a degree of attention that the Cavaliere himself, a frequent visitor, did not always receive; though in justice to this institution it is but right to say that even the most casual and purposeless of visitors is by no means slighted,—the painstaking and conscientious way in which long-closed shutters are opened and long-locked-up relics are brought forth fills the time-killing idler

with something almost like a repentant shame. Pensieri-Vani often saw Avon there in close conference with the head librarian, and knowing that his Grace was engaged in laboriously forming a costly and magnificent collection of works of art and the like for the pleasure that its dissipation would presently afford a certain young blackguard of a nephew, thought no more about it, and went on steadily congealing himself in his churches. In one of these, one morning, as he sat under the apse, from which a stiff array of gaunt and forbidding figures cast a stony and spectral glare upon himself and his work,—they had never been sketched before, and resented the intrusion,—a step came lightly and briskly up the nave, and a voice which he immediately recognized presently addressed him over his shoulder. It was the Contessa Nullaniuna, who at once made apparent her assumption that her presence at such a time and place could not but be highly appreciated, and who accounted for herself with a fluency that, in even her least inspired moments, never quite deserted her. She wore a costume of rich and sober black,—it were a *bêtise*, indeed, to walk Ravenna's mournful streets in colors,—but her parasol carried a huge bow of vivid scarlet which appreciably mitigated the sepulchral chill of the sanctuary. She was visiting, she announced, some dear friends of hers, who had been kind enough to ask her to pass a fortnight with them,—the family of the Caduti; and how strange it was that he should have been in the town nearly that length of time already without their once having met each other. And how opportune it was, too, that she should have encountered

him here at Ravenna, where, of all places in the world, a "human interest" (as the phrase went) was most seriously lacking. She laid her parasol upon a chill and ancient sarcophagus close by, and turned upon him with an air which seemed to intimate that her contribution of the hitherto-missing human interest would begin at once.

The Cavaliere immediately noted the double torsion of the truth which marked his fair visitor's monologue. He knew that the Contessa must have invited herself to Ravenna, for the Caduti would never voluntarily have brought upon themselves the martyrdom involved in a fortnight's entertainment of anybody whomsoever; and he had, furthermore, very positive knowledge that their family circle had remained uninvaded up to within the last three days. But there are times when almost all of us find it advantageous to perform our little variations on the truth, and the Cavaliere, smilingly admiring the richness of the Contessa's orchestration, set her another theme by asking civilly after her good spouse. But the Contessa's treatment of this subject was in a manner as plain and bald as the mention of the Count's name usually provoked. She knew very little, she declared, of her husband's present whereabouts; she raised her eyebrows at the Cavaliere's superfluous courtesy, and shrugged her liege back into the obscurity from which this courtesy had brought him. And she appeared to express the conviction that Ravenna and the present hour might very justly monopolize all the attention that she had to bestow.

But to one so highly contemporaneous as this lady

the present hour was much more important than the present place, and she made no pretense of concealing the fact that, to her, the student was more interesting than his study. In vain the Cavaliere held up Ravenna as the most unique town in Europe,—a town whose monuments seemed infinitely more gray and hoary than the most time-honored ruins of Rome itself, and stood mementos of a peculiarly curious and critical epoch in history,—an epoch which, without them, must have ever remained a mere blank; in vain he invited her to inhale that peculiar atmosphere of the far-aside — so much more rare and precious than the atmosphere of the merely far-behind — which overhangs and permeates the ancient capital of the Exarchate; in vain he opened up the musty annals of the place and attempted to quicken an interest in the shades of Stilicho and Odoacer; in vain he escorted her about among the various fabrics that still survive from the last of the Roman and the first of the Gothic days: she yawned at the mausoleum of Theodoric, and failed to palpitate even at the storied tomb of Galla Placidia. Pensieri-Vani, who conceived that he had now harped on every string which the visitor and student in this hoary and venerable town was ordinarily expected to respond to, was quite nonplussed when the Contessa at last roundly declared that there was nothing hoary or venerable about her, and with an air of impatient familiarity requested him to retire these moss-grown interests to their rightful obscurity. He had been her guide, her philosopher, her friend, but none of these, it seemed, was quite enough; and it was presently borne in upon him that if he did all

that was expected of him he would make a flying leap from the fifth century to the nineteenth, and, landing at the feet of his fair contemporary, would devote himself exclusively to her gratification. To such an arrangement as this there could be but one objection, and the Count, whose present post was quite unknown, could not be regarded as an objection that was insuperable. Then, if the Cavaliere were to become a *cavaliere servente*, there was abundant warrant for such a course,—in Ravenna. The idea embodied in this singular social figure was rather antiquated, to be sure; but Pensieri-Vani, as I have shown, had distinct leanings toward the antique. He entered upon his new duties with a joyful promptness, and from his new standpoint seemed to see in the immediate future the revivification of the Romagna.

But the Cavaliere entertained quite a diversity of interests, and was perfectly capable of driving two of them abreast. La Nullaniuna, who was not the first woman whose intimacy he had enjoyed, filled only half his vision, and he had one eye left for Avon and Severn and his ducal doings. These doings, while they were becoming more interesting, remained none the less obscure, and Pensieri-Vani was quite delighted when the Contessa suggested that their *entente cordiale* should be emphasized by an attempt on her part to penetrate the ducal intentions. She was not on good terms with the Duke himself,—very few people were,—but she felt quite assured that the reception of the New Corinne at the Biblioteca Comunale, which his Grace visited so frequently, would be all that her genius justly demanded, and would lead her to all she

wanted to learn. In all this she was quite right. The custodians of the town's literary possessions received her with a most respectful courtesy; her finesse made them as but clay in the potter's hands; and she was able to report to Pensieri-Vani one object, at least, of Avon's stay in the place, and the sole object of his numerous visits to its chief repository of learning.

The Duke, it seemed, had been brought to Ravenna by a rumor of equal interest to the book-lover and the book-buyer. A small collection of undoubted Aldines, to be found somewhere, known to be in the possession of somebody, and likely to be obtainable by somebody else, was the magnet that had drawn him hither. The shade of Aldo Manuzio had guided him across the Apennines, and was now stalking before him through Ravenna's silent streets. The Duke had set his heart upon these volumes, and the Duke's nephew—who was something of a book-maker himself—would no doubt inherit the joy of his cultivated relative. Here was an opportunity for the Cavaliere to close a long-open account; and the Contessa, who had entertained Avon at Pisa with an anticipated pleasure which his peculiar manners had seriously qualified, begged to enter a partnership which seemed to offer a chance for a partial revenge, at least, on the guest's discourtesy. This revenge was not to be such a simple and primitive affair as revenges frequently are, for it was to involve the second generation. The sins of the uncle should be visited upon the nephew, and the future duke of Avon and Severn, as the auctioneer's hammer knocked down Rubens and Goujon and Cellini and Hobbema, should suffer untold exas-

peration at the thought of the hand which had rescued the great Venetian from the infliction of a corresponding brutality.

The Cavaliere, who was now holding the ribbons over the Duke and the Countess, presently added a third interest, bringing the Caduti under them, too. La Nullaniuna still held her place as a member of this impoverished household, but Pensieri-Vani, after various attempts made in a tentative and circuitous way, finally brought her to a partial sense of the embarrassment she was occasioning her entertainers. She boldly offered to transfer herself to a hotel. But the Cavaliere was not prepared for this. He acted, if not as her conscience, at least as her balance-wheel, and while he encouraged her to an occasional advance, he more frequently held her back from a serious indiscretion. But he merely said that though each of the rival inns might be decorated with numerous tablets commemorating their entertainment of various serenities and transparencies, these decorations did nothing to mitigate their dread discomfort; and the impatient lady declared that she saw nothing to do but to leave the town altogether. She would never have chosen it herself, anyway (the Cavaliere raised his eyebrows at this unconscious admission), and should be glad to leave so dull a place at once. But their difficulty solved itself, as some difficulties will. The Duke, it presently came to them, was on the point of breaking up his establishment and of transferring himself to Venice. The Cavaliere, who had about finished his task at Ravenna, and who himself longed for a brisker life, and who, besides, favored Venice as a battle-field with the confi-

dence that a knowledge of every foot of the ground inspired, was willing enough to make the transfer, likewise; and Avon had scarcely left for Venice by rail via Bologna before Pensieri-Vani and La Nullaniuna themselves entered upon a more direct, though less frequented, road toward the Lagoons.

XI

VENICE: A DOUBLE ENDEAVOR

THE two competitors arrived on the ground at very nearly the same time, for Avon, though he adopted a speedier route, did not fully realize the rôle which the Cavaliere was putting upon him, and so saw no necessity for pushing through at the speed with which he had begun. But this leisurely advance did not particularly accrue to the Cavaliere's advantage, for Pensieri-Vani, as he entered Venice, was met at the outset by a complication of interests which competed briskly enough for his attention and almost threatened to eclipse the Aldines altogether. The first intimation he received that his visit to Venice was not to have bibliography for its be-all and end-all came to him as, in his very first stroll, he passed between the two columns of the Piazzetta and looked out over the serried ranks of the gondolas toward the picturesque shipping that surrounded the Dogana. In the midst of this, though with an uncrowded freedom which bespoke the enjoyment of a very great consideration, the twin spars of

a light and graceful craft swayed with the movements of the in-rushing tide and shook their snowy festoons of canvas over the easy curve of a swept and garnished deck. The Cavaliere immediately addressed himself to the nearest gondolier for information regarding this elegant and high-bred stranger, and more than shared the boatman's appreciative delight when he learned that he was looking upon the new yacht of the Prorege of Arcopia. He had heard nothing definite from the Prorege for several months — no more, in fact, than that his building operations had been going on quite extensively for some time, though, if report could be credited, on lines rather different from those originally laid down; and this sudden presentation of the viceregal figure filled him with a pleased surprise. He was glad to note the proof that the Arcopians had at last arrived at a full appreciation of their ruler,— though this, of course, was bound to come sooner or later; and he congratulated himself on an opportunity for turning to his own account the proverbial good nature of this easy-going prince. He was striving after the Aldines less because he wanted them himself than because he knew that Avon wanted them; he could hardly afford to buy them, and would not care for them overmuch even if he were to obtain them; but if he could influence some liberal patron of the arts to exert himself to acquire these precious trifles, he might easily carry his point without any embarrassment to his own plans or pocket.

But the Prorege's presence in Venice involved, as the Cavaliere presently discovered, the presence of

several other people, more than one of whom stood ready to make considerable claims upon his time and attention. The first and chief of these was Occident, who appeared within the initial twenty-four hours of the Cavaliere's stay.

Pensieri-Vani had just received a handful of letters from the Prorege,— letters which had been addressed to him at various places, and which, following him on from Ravenna to Venice, reiterated in varied phrase one very flattering invitation,— and was felicitating himself on the fashion in which the fates were furthering his plans, when a card was handed in which was presently followed by the child of so many cares. Occident presented himself in the first instance as the bearer of a message. The Prorege, he said, while not now himself in Venice (having two or three days' business on the mainland), was almost hourly expected to return; and as soon after his arrival as practicable the *Adria*, with a brilliant company of guests, would set sail for Arcopia to participate in the approaching festivities commemorating the completion of the Prorege's latest enterprise. The Cavaliere was most particularly and urgently invited to enroll himself among the passengers; Occident, in fact, represented himself as but one of a half-dozen to whom the present office had been intrusted. Pensieri-Vani thereupon showed his packet of letters to Occident, and declared himself now sufficiently invited to justify an unqualified acceptance. He had not realized that he had been so buried from the world, and asked for the names of a few of his fellow-voyagers. Some of these names he recognized, and

some of them he did not; but Hors-Concours was among them, and he recalled the Princess Altissimi without any great difficulty.

Occident presented himself, in the second instance, as a suppliant. His manner from the moment he crossed the threshold had foreboded, in its outcropping of embarrassment and vexation and worry, an appeal for sympathy and help, and Pensieri-Vani, when the appeal at length came, was less surprised than annoyed. The harassed and shamefaced Occident set forth at some length the story of the complications from which he begged his friend to extricate him; but a general statement of his trouble is all that I can allow myself here. This trouble he had brought upon himself by his assumption of the rôle of picture-buyer, and his independence and confidence had involved him pretty deeply. He had not only made several purchases that the knowing ones were beginning to consider disadvantageous, but, what was worse, he was bound to other purchases whose consummation, he was coming to feel, would be simply disastrous. He confessed himself unable to cope with the members of the worshipful company of picture-dealers, whose slippery sinuosities he could not begin to follow, and he implored the Cavaliere, as a gentleman-amateur, to come to his assistance. Pensieri-Vani listened to his visitor's tale with some impatience, and promised, though rather grudgingly, to do what he could, for he felt that in this particular emergency he was not likely to figure to any great advantage. He had never made as thorough a study of the Venetian school as of the Florentine, and his

knowledge of it, though respectable, was not such as would compel the consideration of a shrewd and astute picture-dealer. Ladronini, on the Lung' Arno, would have feared him; but these people on the Canalazzo could not be influenced in the same way. But in what other way they could be influenced by any force at his disposal he was by no means sure. His knowledge of pictures was his chief weapon, after all; it was at moments like this that the shortness of his social stature and the blankness of his social backing called out his most impatient protest. If he were only a great and weighty figure, like Arcopia, what might he not do! but the thought of the favor that he himself meant to ask at the hands of this serviceable prince barred him from preferring any petition in Occident's behalf. But the first thing to do was to explore the ground, and Occident presently undertook to pilot him to the presence of the supposititious Bordones and Bellinis.

Now Occident had been in Venice but a fortnight, and while he was tolerably well versed in the theory of threading the Venetian maze, he had not had much opportunity for actual practice. It was not long before he became uncertain of his way; from the uncertain he passed to the bewildered; from the bewildered he passed to the helplessly and hopelessly lost; and the Cavaliere, who, in following Occident's lead, had given no particular heed to his course, came to be quite as completely at sea. A stranger lost in Venice;—sad and sorrowing sight! What balkings from bridgeless canals;—what rebuffs from deceptive culs-de-sac;—what significant smiles from passers-by;

what cutting gibes from grinning street-boys;—what air-cleaving shouts from window to window, to tell of another forestiere gone astray! Occident quailed before these hurtling sarcasms, and resigned to the amused Cavaliere the guidance of the expedition.

It was in a dark and narrow and stony little *călle*, where a cleft cypress, peeping over a high wall, testified that the entire world was not built of brick and mortar, and a sparse band of blue just overhead served as a reminder that somewhere or other the sun was still shining, that the Cavaliere again reached terra cognita. At a sudden turning—or shall I say, crossing—they all at once found themselves face to face with the Duke of Avon, who passed them rapidly with a stare of surprise and displeasure, and a particularly ungracious bow. The Cavaliere gave one glance to the right and one to the left, and knew where he was instantly. The sight of Avon reminded him of their common reason for being in Venice, and of the existence, too, somewhere in that very neighborhood, of a certain antiquarian's shop where he himself had once had dealings; the direction of Avon's walk told him in which way this shop lay and revealed to him in a flash the topography of the whole quarter. The Aldines might be within a few score yards of him, now. Oblivious of all pictorial fraud, he seized Occident by the arm, dragged the astonished young fellow back a hundred feet or more, turned a sudden corner, crossed a diminutive piazza, hurried up a narrow little lane, and in a moment more again encountered the Duke at the bookseller's very door. He saw at a glance that the Duke perceived the whole situation;

he felt sure that Avon had received intelligence of their inquiries at Ravenna,— intelligence which, taken in connection with this peculiar meeting, put his rival in full possession of the consciousness of rivalship. But neither one betrayed himself; each passed on (though with the scantest courtesy) as if he had no interest in the neighborhood whatever and as if his presence there were of the most casual character. But Pensieri-Vani judged from Avon's manner — the Duke could not but have betrayed himself had any immediate risk been involved — that the common recipient of their intended visits was to serve merely as a stepping-stone to the final result; and he deemed it safe to go on for a short time with Occident's affair.

The masterpieces which had so fixed their clutch on the purse of this ambitious connoisseur were housed in one of the minor *palázzi* on the Grand Canal, and the individual who seemed most interested in their transfer appeared to have assumed with some degree of success the exterior of a gentleman. He exhibited an assurance for which his environment and his own personal aspect furnished an adequate justification, and the Cavaliere presently discerned through the thin veil of false respect that the fellow hung between them the dim outlines of a great conspiracy whose fabric was firm and whose figures were many. The canvases were not much better and not much worse than he had anticipated finding them. Concerning one he himself was in doubt; a second was of the school to whose head it was attributed; a third was a flagrant and impudent fraud. The Cavaliere made a few careful comments, and asked a cautious ques-

tion or two; but the veil lifted enough to reveal the presence of a potential insolence which he could resent, indeed, but which he could hardly punish, and he thought it advisable to act on the time-honored motto of "festina lente." He presently withdrew, but the sneering ceremony with which the picture-dealer bowed him out and the impertinent glance of secure proprietorship under which his young companion made an exit remained to rankle in his breast.

But another concern soon came to overlay this one. The gondola which they had taken from amidst the tall and gaily painted *páli* that hedged in the palace steps had hardly gone forward a hundred yards when it was overtaken by a similar craft, issuing from a side canal, whose propeller sped it rapidly forward under the urgings of its excited occupant. This impatient person turned out to be the Contessa; her face was full of great things, and the Cavaliere saw at a glance that a very important advance had been made in the matter of the Aldines. They were almost in sight, as it seemed, when the ardent lady poured out the account of her doings, though as her account progressed their number seemed to diminish strangely. She announced furthermore, as the two gondolas advanced side by side down the canal, that the Prorege had returned to the city and that the departure for Arcopia would take place on the morrow. She hardly knew how she was to accept the quarters which the Prorege had placed at her disposal; one of the ladies, indeed, had been kind enough to allow any services that her own maid could perform, but really there would be no ward-

robe for the woman to look after — she herself had never before put to sea at an hour's notice. But all that was of little consequence; as long as the Cavaliere, too, was to sail with the rest, and as their business in Venice must be closed immediately, time was the thing that was most important. She had traced the Aldines as far as she alone could go; the Cavaliere himself must take the matter up at once and bring it to a close. He might well, however, prepare to find the volumes less numerous and less valuable than they had anticipated; but, such as they were, they could be found somewhere in Canareggio if he would lose no time in seeking that quarter. A note of protest that might shortly develop into indignation began to sound in the Contessa's rapid monologue, and the air of doubting surprise with which she had first greeted Occident had already given way to an expression of grave displeasure that he should have been the means of diverting Pensieri-Vani's attention at such a time from an undertaking of so much consequence, and that the Cavaliere should have allowed himself to be so easily turned aside. More and more she took the tone of one slighted, superseded, abandoned; every intonation breathed a protesting sigh over man's inconstancy, ingratitude, and instability, and the alarmed Cavaliere felt obliged to make, in his own defense as well as for the ease of his bewildered companion, a brief statement of the affair for whose settlement he had allowed himself to be temporarily drawn away from his own concern and hers. This explanation of itself would have done little to placate the offended Contessa, but the immediate prospect of

another matter to dabble in at once dispelled her gathering anger and refilled her with an enthusiasm as eager as her first. At her suggestion, or her command, Pensieri-Vani hastened on alone to the distant Jewish quarter, and on her invitation Occident transferred himself to her own boat, where, on the way back to the Molo, he poured into her interested ears at greater length his tale of woe. The Contessa was simply fascinated by his fantastic and lugubrious recital, and declared that nothing would satisfy her but an attempt to beard the lion in his den; and this attempt she entered upon a few hours later in the same day. She divined that Occident himself would add nothing to the strength of her forces, so she decided to associate with her the Princess Altissimi, and to ask Hors-Concours to serve as their escort. A *grande dame* and a *femme d'esprit* she flattered herself — making no account of their companion, who, as a mere man, was quite unfitted for an exploit of this character — might very confidently court success; the one should magnificently overawe, and the other might intrigue and strategize to the top of her bent. The Contessa set out with her train in high feather, but when she again encountered Occident on her return, the young man still wore in her sight the chains by which art for money's sake had bound him. Her expedition had not been a very great success; the "creatures" — she never alluded to them in any other terms — had been greatly impressed, indeed, but in no great measure intimidated; and poor Occident, whose loss of money and credit and spirits had already been pretty considerable, could only look

forward to the doleful hour when he should be more or less completely stripped of all three.

Pensieri-Vani, meanwhile, had lunched wretchedly in a vile little den in Canareggio, and had at length, after repeated knockings from pillar to post all among the ethereal showers of goose-down that waft themselves through the precincts of that remote and unprepossessing quarter, come upon some traces of the great treasure for whose possession he had so striven. At about the time that the Contessa was contending with the impostors of the Palazzo Truffa the Cavaliere stood in the doorway of a mean and dingy little house on a side canal scrutinizing in alternation the title-pages of two diminutive volumes—to this had the treasure dwindled—each of which was stamped with the magical dolphin and anchor and bore the great name of AL DVS. Each purported also to be a Statius of 1502. Both were of the same size and bulk; both were printed on paper thin and smooth and unsized; in both the initial capitals were upright, unduly small, and detached so as to form a perpendicular line quite by themselves;—while the body of the text was in that small, clear "aldine" type patterned after the thin, sharp, inclined handwriting of Petrarch; and in both the title-page was undoubtedly an integral part of the volume. But there were minor differences in these titles that a bibliophile would not be slow to observe, and that caused the Cavaliere to regard both volumes with a serious suspicion. They not only differed from each other, but neither was wholly consistent with itself. He put them both back into the hands of their present possessor,—a gray-

bearded old man who had pushed his skull-cap back on his head, and who now stood rubbing his hooked nose with an abstracted indifference,—and then he snatched them back and chose between them. The gray-beard, for some reason, put no particular value on either, and the Cavaliere, paying the trifling sum demanded, and smiling ruefully at this trivial ending to so great an enterprise, took his book and went his way. Half an hour later the Duke of Avon and Severn purchased the other.

Now that his own affair had come, or so he thought, to a conclusion,—a conclusion however lame and impotent,—the Cavaliere turned himself at once to that other affair of Occident's; and when he learned of the course that things had taken, or had refused to take, he straightway justified himself in a resolution to ask, after all, the assistance of the Prorege; for he had now no favor to ask for himself, and the prince's interest in his young charge was as active as ever. He told Occident of his intention, and cautioned him not to utter a word that might give their august friend an idea of the real gravity of the situation. Occident received this suggestion in blank amaze; he had his own idea of the manner in which the Prorege would best proceed. But Pensieri-Vani pointed out that the less Arcopia himself knew of the matter the more successful his intervention might be, for assuredly he would not condescend to a mere contest of wits with a pack of ignoble sharpers, nor would he submit to the ignominy of lending his dignity and state to cow a handful of felonious individuals who in mere shrewdness might have quite outmatched them.

Occident soon saw the reasonableness of this, and Pensieri-Vani presently went to pay his respects to the Prorege. The Prorege, for some reason or other, was in the best of good spirits. He was delighted to meet the Cavaliere, and readily agreed to accompany Occident next morning to view that young man's prospective purchases. The Cavaliere gave him a cautiously remote inkling of the nature of the case and, on his own responsibility, sent a message to the Palazzo Truffa to the effect that the Prorege of Arcopia would please himself by calling there next day.

Occident was a total stranger in Venice; La Nullaniuna and the Princess were not nearly so well known as in their own proper cities; but the whole town knew the Prorege of Arcopia, and, most of all, that side of the town with which he was now, however unconsciously, to deal. As our prince, accompanied by his flurried and doubting protégé, arrived at the palace to despatch with a careless geniality what he fancied to be but a brief and casual errand, the note of preparation sounded on the threshold, obsequiousness ushered him in, and propitiation smiled dubiously from every corner. The Prorege, who had long since given up any hope of meeting, outside of Arcopia, that simple respect which he would have so much preferred to servility, seated himself with a plain assumption that any attention from him to such as these were must be, if only an unfavorable attention, provocative of an appreciative thankfulness, and smilingly awaited the production of the pictures.

The visit was rather longer than the Prorege's time

really allowed, and went off into various ramifications that he could by no means have foreseen; but he enjoyed it thoroughly, nevertheless, and the eyes of adoring thanks which Occident turned upon him as they came away made him pleased with himself for days afterward. I shall not attempt to recite in detail the gradual but remorselessly steady fashion whereby the hardy and sharp-lined form into which an insolent fraud had cast and solidified itself melted down and trickled away before the warm breath of persiflage and ridicule which the Prorege blew upon it. But though we must assume the stare of laughing amaze that he fastened upon the counterfeited Bordone, and the glance of comic despair which he cast upon his so patiently instructed but so cruelly disappointing pupil, and the hundred shrugs and jests and eyebrow-liftings and quizzical interrogations with which he harried and hunted down the demoralized wretches before him, yet the final coup which he administered is worth a word or two. With the help of a question now, and an admission (equally reluctant on both sides) then, an easy inference here, a riskless assumption there,— all done with a smiling face and a friendly manner upon which resentment could take no hold,— he reached substantially the bottom of the whole affair; and, simultaneously, certain dim recollections of similar faces on a similar occasion several years before clarified in his mind and shone forth from his face; and the moment came when the conspirators fully realized that he knew them for what they were.

The Prorege rose to go, and as he drew on his

gloves he made for a moment the only use of the grand manner which he employed during his entire call. He announced with a marked accession of gravity that his young friend's present purpose was really less to buy pictures than to sell them; his companion had at his apartment a number of canvases,— with some of them they were perhaps already familiar,—for which he bespoke an inspection and proposals. The Prorege loftily fixed a threatening eye upon the miscreants, and left with their stammered promise to give this matter a prompt attention; and Occident, whose ignorance and inexperience may, after all, have magnified the difficulty into which he had fallen, congratulated himself on the removal of the only impediment standing between him and the pleasures of the excursion to Arcopia.

XII

THE ADRIATIC: ARCOPIA ON THE HORIZON

THOUGH the Prorege had a great partiality for the Lagoons and always kept a warm place in his heart for the Venetian city, his arrivals there, in no less degree than his departures thence, were invariably attended by one great pain; and when the *Adria*, pointed toward the Dalmatian coast, spread her shining sails to leave the city of St. Mark upon the watery horizon, each guest on board knew why his host had fixed his steady gaze upon the distant outlines of the Euganean hills, to keep it there until St. Mark's tall campanile should be lost from sight. For a single glance in the opposite direction, toward the once-lovely convent-isle of Sant'

Elena, would have filled him with an impotent yet gnawing rage, and have brought to his cheek a vivid blush of shame for the government of which he was constrained to acknowledge himself a part. For Italy, the Modern, the United, had set her heavy official foot upon this little clump of sea-encircled foliage;— no beneficent Minerva whose one light stamp called forth the olive, but brutal Progresso, whose iron-shod hoof had trampled the olive down, together with a hundred other gracious and tender things, into the muck and mire, and had heaped upon it the hundred revolting forms that refuse may assume,— that a great and hideous iron-foundry can produce and even pride itself in producing.

He had protested vehemently, indignantly, against so gross and wanton an outrage, but also ineffectually; and he had for his consolation only the thought that all right-minded persons were with him, and the self-administered but triumphant assurance that Italy, indeed, might be re-barbarized, but Arcopia never. His own people had kept so close to the primitive rightness of natural man that no such sin as this would ever have suggested itself to them. Had any of them given unwilling lodgment to the idea they would not have wished to act upon it, nor cared to; and had they cared they still would not have dared: they could not have borne up against the flood of execration that would have come rolling in upon them. Whose was the earth? our indignant prince would ask himself when considerations of this kind rose up to irritate him. Was it the exclusive possession of those merely who were now living out their

brief day upon it, or was it something more — the foothold and heritage of generations yet to come? Who could make good to those of the coming century the felled trees, the gashed and leveled hills, the polluted ponds and choked-up streams that signalized our present dealings with outraged and suffering Mother Nature? Who was to render back to them an earth as beautiful as that which we ourselves received as our right,— an earth whose possession and enjoyment is as much, as inalienably, their right as ours? More; what power could save us — us, full of small greeds and great irreverences — from the amaze and scorn and contempt and indignation of millions yet unborn? The Prorege, as he tormented himself with such vain questionings as these, would have been well enough pleased to give up the land and to continue on the water — the self-purifying and unconquerable sea — for all the rest of his days instead of merely for the three or four that his present journey demanded, were not every puff that filled the *Adria's* wide-spread sails carrying him straight to a land where Nature was loved and revered,— where man would no more rack and mutilate the great frame of things of which he was consciously and joyfully a part than the hand would raise itself to mar and disfigure the face.

The sentiments of the Prorege found an echo — an echo clear, indeed, but somewhat transmogrified, as echoes occasionally come to be —in the mind of one, at least, of his guests. This was the Duke of Avon and Severn, who (through some vague notions of reparation, perhaps) came, at the last moment and rather to the displeasure of more than one of our

acquaintances, to be included in the viceregal party. He, however, spoke less as a natural man than as a landed proprietor. He had lately taken to democracy for amusement, as we have already seen him taking to charity (his amusements were always contemporaneous, yet never trivial); and democracy, in its industrial form, had lately taken to the erection of grimy chimneys which quite overtopped his ancestral oaks and blew incessantly great clouds of smoke across his meadows and paddocks. His last brief and long-delayed visit to his own island had convinced him that he could very well dispense with witnessing the last stages of that transformation which had all but changed the most lovely land in the whole world into the most hideous, and had confirmed him in the resolution to limit the application of democracy, as well as the exercise of philanthropy, to those cisalpine regions which had now become his permanent home. His inquiries concerning Arcopian affairs generally, the Prorege's answers to them, and the discussions which naturally ensued were listened to by Occident with a kind of fascinated trepidation which the Prorege's cold-bloodedness and the Duke's problematical sincerity did little to allay. The Prorege would roundly declare that, as far as concerned the general mass of humanity, life was made up not of a few great things, but of a great many little things; and that to encourage the populace to believe itself doing an essential and a meritorious thing when it dabbled in complicated questions of government, religion, science, and all that, or to imagine itself free because it might be at liberty to abuse its gov-

ernors, was a very serious error. Not ten men in a thousand could think at all; not more than one in the ten could think correctly and to any good end: a people who had enough to eat, enough to be busy over, a little leisure, a little amusement, an opportunity to effect some little saving, the enjoyment of a considerable degree of social order and security, a settled way of life, and the good sense to do as little thinking as possible might be expected to get along very well and happily, indeed. The Arcopians did so. All this seemed to Occident, whose boyhood had been nourished on the polemics of rustic theologians who boldly grappled with the knottiest problems that confront the moral world, and on the forensics which the Shelbyville advocates (who perhaps worshiped Mind at the expense of manners) frequently transferred from the court-house to the tavern, a hard saying, indeed — a saying made no easier through the semi-satirical questionings by which Avon appeared to take the other side. When his Grace asked if a people were entitled to any better government than their collective sense and capacity could achieve, Occident made bold to say that they could have none better, and ventured to expatiate at some little length on the beauties and blessings of popular suffrage as disclosed in his own highly favored land. The Prorege straightway declared that self-government on any but a small scale, and in any but a young and simple society, was a ludicrous and hideous fallacy, and maintained that of all the perversions which the workings of the human mind as applied to politics had developed, none was more astoundingly illogical than that which

resulted in the conclusion that an aggregation of half a million human beings, crowding into the space of a few square miles the extremes of wealth and poverty, and all the possibilities of ambition and villainy and ignorance and vice and misery and lawlessness and seething discontent, could rule itself. Under such conditions white-robed Theory was foredoomed to strangulation at the sinewy hands of merciless Practice; and as for the restless ghost of Confusion that would leave the lifeless body, where was the power to lay it? No great city could be self-governing; the first desideratum was a ruler, to save the people from itself.

Occident slyly inquired what bearing all this had on the governing of the Arcopian capital; as the entire province, he understood, contained considerably less than half a million souls to be saved from themselves, the population of its chief town could not be dangerously large. The Prorege was not slow to detect and resent that disparagement of smallness which the continental possibilities of Shelby County have done so much to encourage, and he reminded his young friend that the biggest city was not always the one to make the longest and deepest mark. Florence, in her great days, contained a population of less than a hundred thousand; Athens, in full flower, numbered less than a third of that. Arcopia, the gods be praised, was quite exempt from the modern curse of bigness. One chimney was not offensive, but a million made a London. One refuse-heap could be tolerated, but accumulated thousands produced a New York. A hundred weavers in their own cottages meant peace-

ful industry and home content; a hundred hundred, massed in one great factory, meant vice and squalor and disorder. Society had never courted failure or bid for misery more ardently than when it had accepted an urban industrialism for a basis. The only true and lasting and healthy and happy and natural foundation for a successful national life was that offered by agriculture.

This was in pretty close accord with Avon's own ideas, but Occident, whose early life had not sounded, perhaps, all the graceful possibilities of an agricultural existence, and who was decidedly of his day and race in his aversion to a life perpetually rustic, asked, rather contemptuously, if the great Arcopian nobles were farmers. The Prorege replied, with an appreciable accession of sternness, that the Arcopian nobles were men. An adult human male being might be, and frequently was, a good deal less than a man, but he could not be more. In this present day it was becoming more and more necessary to discriminate between a man and a highly specialized machine. When they should reach Arcopia he would be glad to present his questioner to several gentlemen, almost any one of whom, by his symmetrical and evenly developed character and a respectable capacity in a variety of directions, might suggest the figure of the great Vashingtone himself. The Prorege's vanity was privately tickled at the ease and effect with which he had made this learned allusion; but his complacency gave way, a moment later, to the fiercest indignation on Occident's carelessly remarking that he did n't know that the Father of his Country was ever considered

much of a financier. At this, our good-humored prince, for the first and last time in his life, as far as I am aware, quite lost his temper. If it were necessary, he angrily declared, to discriminate between a man and a machine, it was doubly, trebly necessary to discriminate between a man and a mere money-machine. He was furious, and but for Avon's intervention in the astonished young man's behalf he would have gone to lengths from which a host might have found it awkward and humiliating to return. The Duke smiled amicably and said that he was full of pleasant anticipations concerning Arcopia and its people,—their prince being what he was, he expected great things,—an Arcadia, perhaps a Utopia. The placated Prorege smilingly cautioned his guest not to expect too much: Arcopia was no Arcadia, no Utopia; it was only the two combined.

But a little incident which occurred that very evening came to intervene between the Duke and the Arcopian felicities. The company had descended to the cabin after an hour spent on deck in the early starlight to the tinkling of the mandolin and the pleasantly blending notes of three or four good voices: and the sight of the well-filled bookcases which formed a part of the yacht's outfitting gave the talk an unfortunate turn toward literature. From books to book-making was but a step, and this step the Contessa, after an exchange of glances with Pensieri-Vani, presently took; what more natural than a mention of Aldus on the eve of one's departure from Venice? Her object was to get a declaration of some kind from Avon, and she did get it without much delay.

For the Prorege, at the mention of the great Venetian, at once took up the word, entering upon such a glowing panegyric of this earnest and many-sided man, who was at once author and editor, type-founder, printer, proof-reader, and publisher,—who organized an extensive printing-house, who superintended the work of his men from composition to the binding and even the selling of his books, who wrote grammars and compiled lexicons, who kept up a voluminous and learned correspondence, combating, meanwhile, the treachery of workmen and the frauds of competitors,—that Avon, surprised by so unexpected a burst of enthusiasm, straightway betrayed himself. He remarked that, as the subject of the early Italian printers had been brought up, the company might find some interest in a small volume that had lately been thrown in his way. He put his hand carefully into an inside pocket and handed over to the Prorege his Statius of 1502. The Prorege gave a look at the title-page and his mounting enthusiasm suddenly cooled. With a smile, half of amusement, half of embarrassment, he gave Avon a word of formal congratulation, and passed the volume over to the inspection of his right-hand neighbor. The Cavaliere, who felt (or so he thought) the full significance of the Prorege's change of manner, thereupon declared that he, too, had recently come into possession of an Aldine, and asked for his little book the attention that the Duke's had already received. The Prorege received in like manner the second Statius of 1502. He took a single glance at the first leaf and closed the complacent Cavaliere's little offering with a smile of derisive pity.

Avon at once extended his hand for it, and proceeded to subject it to as great and open a contempt as the occasion would permit. The Cavaliere eagerly demanded the Duke's; and with this exchange of rapiers, so to speak, hostilities seriously began.

Avon pointed out that the title-page of the volume which the gentleman had seen fit to purchase — a purchase that had been a little hasty and unconsidered, perhaps — bore that upon its face which stamped it as coming from anywhere rather than from the press of Aldus. The Cavaliere, in no great degree discomposed by the ducal sneer, or by the half-suppressed smiles on the expectant faces around them, regretted, in his turn, that the volume which he himself held, so far from being the work of Aldus, was not the work of any Venetian printer whomsoever. Avon was considerably shaken by this broad and offhand assertion, but retained his composure to point out with some effect the weak point in the Cavaliere's case; he drew attention to the words "Festina lente" which figured on the title-page,— words which, while essential to the genuineness of an Aldine of a later date, were worse than superfluous in one of 1502, at which time the motto — however pertinaciously held later — had not been adopted. To this the Cavaliere replied that a moderately careful inspection of his title would show this motto as having been carelessly added by a later and misguided printer; the types used for these two words were old and worn, quite in contrast with the sharp and clear-cut impression of the new types with which the books of 1502 were printed. He had considered this point already for

himself, and was quite satisfied as to the justness of his conclusion. But he was altogether unable to understand — here he fixed a cruel regard upon the Duke's little book — how the copy in his own hands could ever have been accounted genuine by anybody. It was only necessary to note the device of the anchor and dolphin. In his Grace's copy the head of the dolphin turned toward the left; in every genuine Aldus the head of the dolphin turned to the right; it pained him to be obliged to pronounce the book a production of the Giunta of Florence,— the most successful of counterfeits perhaps, but a counterfeit, all the same.

Avon, who had felt himself fully guarded at every point, was staggered to discover himself so vulnerable, after all; but he pulled himself together enough to attempt a kind of defense. Just at the moment, however, when all his emphasis and eloquence were being employed to prove that the turn of the dolphin's head was by no means an infallible test, something occurred which might well have recalled that famous eclipse of the sun that once put an end to the struggle of contending Asiatic hordes. The awkwardness of a purblind old lady, who was groping among the curtained shelves of one of the bookcases close by, brought tumbling to the floor a dozen or more volumes that seemed to have been piled provisionally in a corner, and that, despite the frantic efforts of the Prorege to hurry them out of sight, lay gaping and sprawling there upon the carpet beyond any possibility of concealment or palliation. Pensieri-Vani, despite the pleadings of the Prorege (who had now come to

a comprehension of the whole situation) that no one would give himself any trouble on account of this little accident, pushed forward to help gather up the fallen volumes; the first one on which he laid his hands was a great folio, whose title-page declared it an Aristophanes of 1500 and — an Aldine. At the Cavaliere's cry of surprise the Duke himself stooped down, and rose again with an Aristotle,— the Organon of 1494, an Aldine also, and of the editio princeps, at that. I shall not attempt to depict the Prorege's embarrassed triumph as the entire party, flocking about, clamored for the inspection of his hitherto-unsuspected treasure: his Ovid and Virgil, his Petrarch and Dante — all Aldines; his great first edition of Plato, for every error in which Aldus offered the discoverer a golden crown. Nor shall I touch upon the delight of Pensieri-Vani and the Contessa, who saw the books bestowed, after all, according to their first intention. Least of all shall I speak of the disappointment and mortification of the Duke; he kept his emotions, by a great effort, to himself, and let us not part the veil which he hung between the world and his own frustrated plans and blighted hopes.

The Contessa's delight, though keen, was proportionately brief; it was scarce twenty-four hours later ere she herself became the prey of emotions doubly as poignant as those which had desolated the Duke and infinitely less disguisable. The Contessa had almost forgotten the episode at Ostia, and supposed the Prorege had almost forgotten it as well. But he remembered it only too perfectly; and though he might never regain the considerate regard of the Roman

city, he was fully determined to visit upon the Contessa as severe a punishment as a gentleman may inflict upon a lady, a host upon his guest; when he remembered the indignity which she, as a guest, had put upon him, he decided that the bounds of courtesy should be extended even a little farther. His opportunity came when the Contessa's vanity led her to an exhibition of her peculiar gift of improvisation; and though her effort was so impassioned, so finished, so charged with genuine feeling, so free from technical blemishes as to compel his unqualified admiration, yet he did not stay his hand against her. When she had concluded she looked toward his place for an expression of that approval which she felt sure she deserved, and which she had been disappointed in once before; but he was nowhere in sight, and it was only after an hour of tremulous yet silent protest and of mortified pride that she noted his reappearance. He begged her pardon for the tardy acknowledgments which pressing concerns in another part of the ship were really to blame for, and proceeded to compliment her with a richness and fullness of expression that none of her other auditors had been able to command. Her grace of gesture, her musically modulated voice, her depth of feeling, her remarkable power of memory, he had never seen surpassed; no recitation to which he had ever listened had given him so great a pleasure. Her "memory"! The Contessa stared. Her "recitation"! She felt an indignation akin to that which wells up from the heart of the girl graduate whose polished and pretentious essay some one dares to call a "piece." But when the Prorege went

on to say that her selection had always been a great favorite of his, and then, taking up a small volume that lay close at hand on a table, read from it one or two of the most striking passages which she had just declaimed, her surprise and dismay and vexation knew no bounds. Her cheek flushed brightly and a glittering drop started in each eye as she demanded to see the book for herself. Alas! Every word she had uttered stared from its pages in cold, uncompromising print. Poor lady!—how could her eyes, filled with vexatious tears, see that the type on one page was quite different from the type on another? How could her dazed brain take in the fact that a leaf or so quite foreign to the original volume had been inserted in it? How could it have occurred to her, or, indeed, to any of those whose amused or surprised or malicious faces surrounded her, that every word she had uttered had been reduced to print within the last hour? For the Prorege's enthusiasm over the art of printing did not stop with mere theory: he carried with him on board the *Adria* not only his secretary, but his press and his workmen, and by a little prearrangement had been able to carry out with celerity and precision a scheme which inflicted upon this long-respited culprit an anguish that almost made amends for the pangs which he himself had suffered at Rome. At the proper time, of course, the Prorege confessed his deception, and reinstated the Contessa in the consideration of her friends; but he did this with a discretionary leisure which did not unduly shorten her pain, and which allowed ample opportunity for the lesson to take a full effect.

And now if, after having touched on Avon's frustrated plans and the Contessa's vexation and dismay, I venture to allude to the discomfort and dissatisfaction that was filling the bosom of a third guest of the Prorege, I run very consciously the risk of making the voyage to Arcopia seem quite other than a voyage of pleasure, and the dedication of his latest architectural masterpiece a much less satisfactory and harmonious occasion than it really was. The third malcontent was Occident, whose dissatisfaction was of a very comprehensive and complicated character. As he sat out upon the deck late one evening with Hors-Concours, smoking a placid cigar, and idly watching the fleet foot-tracks which marked the *Adria's* flight from the pursuing moon, he was moved by the vicinity of a patient, if not a sympathetic, ear to make a general statement of his grievances. First of all, he was angry with the Prorege, with whom he had all but broken. Their opinionative host had ended one of his trying talks not half an hour ago with the blunt declaration that while America might, indeed, be an example to older countries, it was an example to serve less as a pattern than as a warning; and this observation our young man had not yet brought himself to forgive. Then, he was troubled with suspicions of a possible incorrectness of relation between Pensieri-Vani and the Contessa,—a relation which, while it would have led to instant condemnation in Shelbyville, seemed to provoke only the slightest of comment on board the *Adria*. But above all he was tormented with reminiscences of his Venetian experiences,—recollections that became more galling and more har-

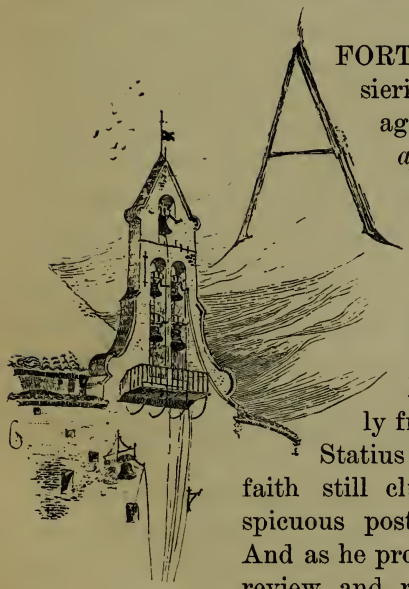
assing with every one of their sudden and unescapable recurrences. He confessed to Hors-Concours a grave doubt of his own ability to take the European attitude; he believed himself unable to master the intricacies of Old World life. There seemed nothing for him to do but to go back to Shelby County and stay there. Hors-Concours asked him if he thought he should be happy there. The poor fellow acknowledged that he should not; every day, every hour, of his life in Shelbyville would bring its own peculiar discomfort. If it would only bring sorrow! there was dignity in this. If it would only bring misery! there was pity for that. But for mere discomfort, however complete, however perpetual, nobody had anything but contemptuous impatience. He felt his position one of peculiar hardship. Birth and habit drew him in one direction; culture and aspiration, in another; but he had never been a good American, and he feared he should never make a good European. He was between two fires, both of which scorched him; between two stools, neither of which offered him a comfortable seat; between the two horns of a dilemma, each of which seemed more cruelly sharp than the other. Hors-Concours, making rather light of his difficulties, suggested that it might be well for him to postpone a decision until he had seen Arcopia: what Arcopia had in store for him I shall presently undertake to relate.

What Circumstance had in store for the *Adria* I will relate at once. Our voyagers were within but a day of the Arcopian capital when, in the midst of a violent storm that lashed the sea into a million angry waves,

and filled the heavens with the vivid courses of an uninterrupted succession of thunderbolts, and strewed the sea-coast with scores of scattered wrecks, the *Adria* was boarded by the Margravine of Schwahlbach-Schreckenstein. The Margravine, who had been so successful in braving the powers of government that she deemed herself able to brave the powers of nature too, had found herself on one of her small estates in Dalmatia, and, deciding on a return to Italy, had determined, despite the advice and warning of every one who could reach her ear, to engage a small craft and to cross directly over to the Italian coast. She had not been aboard her preserver's yacht a quarter of an hour before she made it known that her intention was still unchanged, and that if her expectations were to be at all met the *Adria* would put about and set her down at Ancona. The *Adria*, it is superfluous to say, did nothing of the kind; the *Adria's* owner extended the hospitality of his yacht and his capital to such effect that the high-strung daughter of Arminius was induced to permit him and his guests to continue on their way. He assured her that without the presence of so distinguished a patron of the arts the dedication of Arcopia's new opera-house would limp to but a lame and impotent consummation; and the flattered Margravine, who was by no means invulnerable against the addresses of middle-aged gallantry, graciously consented to decorate a box on that brilliant and momentous occasion.

XIII

FLORENCE: FINALE



A FORTNIGHT later, Pensieri-Vani found himself again domiciled in his *appartamento* at Florence, with the familar Arno beneath his windows and his numerous travel-trophies all around him. The "Madonna Incognita" looked down benignly from the wall, and the Statius of 1502, to which his faith still clung, enjoyed a conspicuous post upon his shelves. And as he proceeded to a leisurely review and rearrangement of his possessions — an attention that an absence of several months, passed in various places, seemed to make necessary — he lost himself in thoughts of the week which he had just enjoyed in Arcopia. As may be readily surmised, the chief event of the week had been

the dedication of that new temple of the Muses upon which the Prorege had decided — rightly considering that a gift lost its character of gift in the precise degree that it took on a cast of mere utility — in place of the town hall originally projected; and the chief figure in his reveries was naturally the Prorege himself, whom he had now seen in all the dignity and splendor of his official state. It was on occasions of this kind that our prince *se reconnaissait* most completely; and as he leaned forward from his box to survey the work which his own taste and liberality had accomplished, and to receive the plaudits which the thronged and brilliant auditorium heaped upon him, he had the felicitous air of a man who feels consciously the exact niche for which he was designed. That poor little happening at Pisa — so impromptu, so provincial — paled to nothingness before the magnificence, the completeness, the *furore*, which signalized the opening of the Arcopian season; and the proregal star, which had then emitted but an uncertain and provisional twinkle, now shone with a broad and steady splendor as the all-acknowledged center of the Arcopian system.

But another figure in the Cavaliere's reveries — a star which gleamed brightly before even the proregal magnificence — was that of the prima donna herself, who shared with her princely patron the homage of the evening. Her first entrance had a most marked effect upon the various personages whom our ingenious prince had grouped about him in his own box. The Margravine gave a short grunt of surprise, the Contessa could not suppress a little

cry of delight, Occident beamed with a kind of amazed ecstasy, and the Cavaliere himself instantly caught the Prorege's hand to squeeze his appreciation of so grateful and delightful a surprise. For the singer was none other than his Pisan protégée, the "Signorina" of their collective beneficence,— more practised, more beautiful than ever, and now, with a gay and graceful facility, warbling her best thanks to the Prorege's astonished guests. Hors-Concours busily explained to the inquiring Princess the precise significance of the situation; and Pensieri-Vani, getting a certain view of Occident's expressive countenance, identified him now, for the first time, with the youth at Pisa whose agonized face had contributed so much to his own panic, and whose lavish munificence had done so much to bring them all to the brink of failure.

From recollections such as these the Cavaliere's thoughts went on to Arcopia in general, and took on a certain tinge of regret and disquiet as the things which his brief visit had left unaccomplished rose up to reproach him. That one short sojourn embraced, perhaps, the opportunity of a lifetime; yet to what little account had he really turned it! How many times had indifference and waning enthusiasm, and a too great regard for mere comfort, come in between him and his own profit. How much he had left unseen, how much undone. How many masterpieces remained unviewed, how many landscapes had been left unsketched, unpainted. How many interesting personages he had failed to meet, how many memorable spots he had left unvisited! Such are some of the *pensieri vani* that torment the home-come voyager,—

such the vain regrets that perpetually prick the conscience of him who fails fully to improve his greatest opportunity.

But if the Cavaliere had failed to improve one opportunity, Occident had fully succeeded in improving another. He dropped in most unexpectedly upon the literary employments of the Cavaliere a month later, and his whole bearing and manner was so conspicuously complacent, so radiantly self-satisfied, that his host at once prepared for a revelation of the most intimate and ecstatic nature. Occident had come, he announced, to say good-by; it was his intention to return to his own home immediately. The Cavaliere, rather surprised,—for he had heard something of Occident's singular state of mind from Hors-Concours,—inquired if he had succeeded in reconciling himself to such a life. Occident replied with a marked emphasis that he had; his wife, like himself, was a native of Shelby County, where they had first become acquainted years ago, and would not fail to feel at home among old scenes and old friends. The astonished Cavaliere sat dumbly through his caller's recital; and when he at last fully comprehended that his "Signorina" had given up her splendid present and her presumably glorious future to wed this very ordinary youth from the dark outskirts of Barbaria, he could scarcely find tongue to voice an appropriate word. When Occident, however, made a very feeling acknowledgment of the kindness shown to the friendless young girl who had become his wife, the Cavaliere was able to wish them as much joy as should crown such a union of genius and fortune. But matrimony

in almost every case, he thought, was a weakness, and in this case it involved nothing less than a sacrifice.

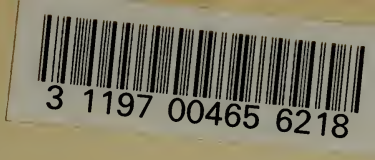
But the Cavaliere's emotional tribute to these Occidental doings was not, fortunately, very excessive, or he would never have been able to stand the drain on his sensibilities that ensued when another and a more intimate friend approached him with similar intelligence. When Hors-Concours, of all men, came to say that he, too, had serious intentions of a matrimonial nature, the dismayed Cavaliere, pierced to the heart, gave him a reproachful glance, murmured the brief yet historical phrase of the great Roman, and muffling himself in the toga of single blessedness, sank deserted at the feet of statued Celibacy. Hors-Concours was much affected by this picturesque proceeding; he was made to feel that he had deserted a friend—that he had, somehow, betrayed a cause; and when the afflicted Cavaliere finally bethought himself to inquire the name and station of the presumptuous interloper (for so he regarded the object of his friend's affections), the Seigneur hesitated to declare them. He presently avowed that he aspired to the hand of the Princess Altissimi. The Cavaliere, ready to catch at every desperate straw, inquired if difference in rank might not prove an obstacle. The Seigneur proudly and gallantly replied that rank was less than birth, and that in birth he might meet the highest on an equal footing. The Cavaliere demanded if the Princess could be expected to live at the Rochers de Hors-Concours. The Seigneur, in turn, desired to know how much he was in the habit of living there himself; he and his bride should reside in Rome or in Florence.

The Cavaliere implored his friend not to end the intimacy of so many years. The Seigneur rejoined that their intimacy might still continue, but that the long line of Hors-Concours must not be allowed to lapse through any fault of his. The Cavaliere ironically inquired if his friend were now absolutely without a son. The Seigneur gravely explained that a son was one thing, a son and heir, another; that the Princess was no green girl, but an experienced and sober-minded woman; and that nothing would compensate him for a failure to pass his heritage in Savoy down in succession to a proper and legitimate posterity. Upon this, Pensieri-Vani hopelessly forebore, and silently added to his long list of failures, and of half-successes that are worse than failures, his bootless attempt to monopolize the affection of the Seigneur of Hors-Concours.

In the fit of despondency into which the nuptials of his friend threw him he was disposed to confound all nice distinctions, to dispense with all saving clauses, and to write the word *failure* against his whole life and career; but he consoled himself with the reflection that no one of us all was able to establish the criterion of real success, or to see the end before the end came; that life had many sides, and that Italy had not yet given up to him all that she had to give; and he presently became himself again. He could still congratulate himself on his exemption from the burdens of wealth, the chafings of domestic relations, the chains of affairs, the martyrdom of a great ambition, and the dwarfing provincialism that comes from one settled home. Others might falter; but he was

still sufficient unto himself, still master of his own time and his own actions, and enamored only of that delightful land whose beauty age cannot wither and whose infinite variety custom can never stale.

THE END.



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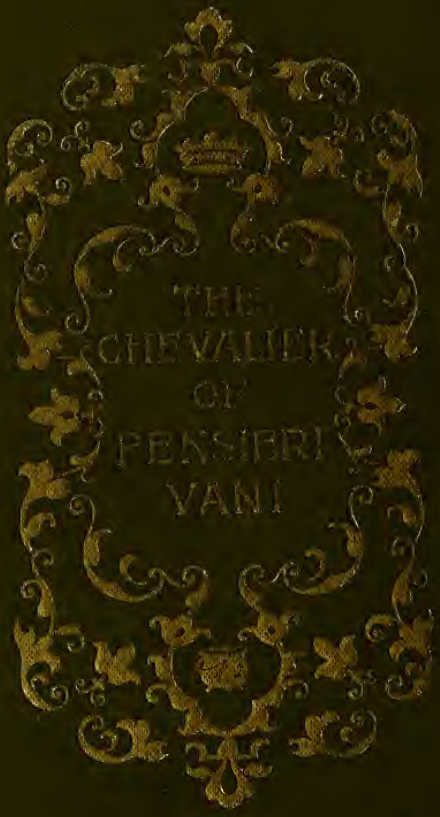
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